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By W. Clark Russell.



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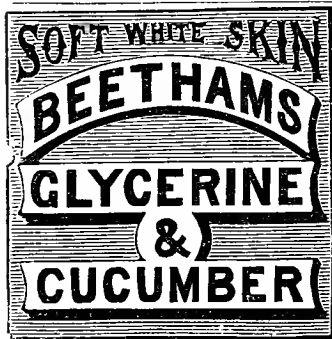
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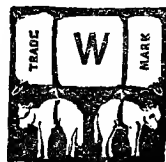
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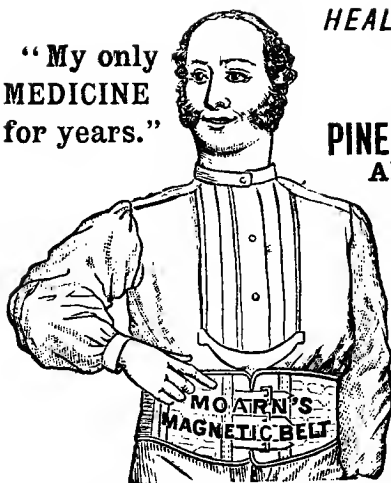
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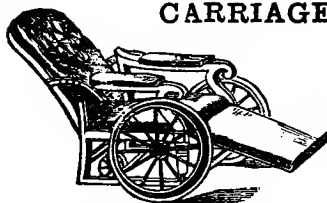
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# ON THE FO'K'SLE HEAD

BY

W CLARK RUSSELL

AUTHOR OF "ROUND THE GALLEY FIRE," "A VOYAGE TO THE CAPE,"  
"A SEA QUEEN," "THE 'LADY MAUD,'" ETC.



London

CHATTO AND WINDUS, PICCADILLY

1886





## PREFACE.

IN the companion volume to this I invited my readers to gather with me "Round the Galley Fire," and listen to my yarns and views on seafaring matters. I now ask them once more to join me, not this time in the ship's kitchen, but on that favourite haunt of seamen when yarns and songs and tobacco-pipes are going in clear warm weather during a dog-watch—the "Fo'k'sle Head." There let us fancy the breeze blows softly and weakly; that astern the sky is red with sunset; that the canvas flaps tenderly against the bright masts; and that the light swell rolling up, a deep blue, from abeam serves as a cradle to soothe you whilst I ask your attention yet again for yarns and fancies about the old ocean which English boys dream about and English men love.

W. CLARK RUSSELL.



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# ON THE FO'K'SLE HEAD.

## *SEA YARNS.*

WHENEVER I had an hour or two to spare on a Friday evening I joined the society of a club, or rather of a community of elderly seamen, some of whom have been mates and others carpenters, boatswains, and the like, who enjoy something of the exclusiveness of a club by hiring a room in a comfortable little hotel. In this they assemble once a week, and here their behaviour is governed by certain laws designed in a highly nautical spirit, though absolutely unnecessary for restraint, so far as I can judge after considerable intercourse with the members, who arrive punctually and depart punctually, who are extremely moderate in their indulgences, and whose conduct is that of sober, respectable old sailors, that "skylarked" plentifully enough in their youthful days, but now look back with mingled smiles and sighs to their mad pranks in distant lands and to their games on shipboard and in home ports. When on a certain Friday evening I entered the room in which these men meet, I found a dozen of them present, nearly all grey haired or bald, variously attired—for after a certain number of years the clothes of the retired merchant



mariner owe what nauticalism they possess to the shape and aspect given them by the legs, hanging arms, and curved back of the wearers—in grey, blue, and black cloth, and every man gravely smoking, with a glass of liquor in front of him. I received a number of nods, and sat down. An old fellow in a sleeved waistcoat was in the middle of a story, and all hands were listening to him, evidently with appreciation and relish. But what with his singular voice and a good deal of stammering and a profusion of “I says, says I’s,” accompanied by as many gesticulations as the master of a paddle-boat might think fit to use on his bridge in a moment of great danger; and what with his approaching the end of the yarn instead of beginning it, I confess I could master little or nothing of what he talked about. He had scarcely ended, however,—a general lifting of tumblers filling the brief interval of silence,—when a square-built man, probably about sixty years old, with a good-natured face and a quantity of iron-grey hair, like so much chafing-gear, lying upon his throat, cleared his pipes, and spoke as follows:—

“Mr. Shingles’ yarn is certainly very curious; and in its way I don’t know that ever I heard anything rummier, as the saying is; yet I can tell you a story that’ll come pretty nigh to it as a singular thing. It’s betwixt thirty and forty years ago now. I was second mate of a barque called the *Lydia Jones*. She was rather a smart vessel, with poop and topgallant forecastle, main skysail-mast, neat headrails, a pretty gilt figurehead, and she was a fairish sailer. We were in the South-east trades, homeward bound, when it happened one morning that I came on deck at four o’clock to relieve the chief mate. It was blowing middling fresh, and I found the barque under a main royal, stunsail booms rigged out, but the sails in the tops, and the vessel driving along at eight or

nine knots an hour. Presently the dawn broke. I took a look, as is natural, around the sea, and my eyes coming to the weather quarter, where the dawn was spreading along the horizon out of the sky like a light sifting through oiled paper, I spied a sail there. Well, as you'll reckon, there was nothing to make one wonder at in that. The sun rose, the watch turned to to wash down, and the captain came on deck. He took notice of the sail on the quarter, went to the companion for the glass and had a look at her. He then turned round, cast his eyes aloft at our masts, and again pointed the glass at the sail; and then says he to me, 'That vessel astern,' says he, 'is under a heavy press. She's coming along hand over fist under royal and topgallant stunsails. When did you first sight her?'

"I told him.

"'Humph!' says he, and he put down the glass and took some turns along the deck.

"Bit by bit that craft grew out of the water, proving her rate of going, until her hull had risen, and then my skipper, having taken a long squint at her, handed me the glass, saying, 'What do you think of her? For my part, I don't like her appearance at all.'

"She was plain in the lenses, coming along with a smother of foam up to the catheads. Her hull was black and low; she was apparently a brig, though one couldn't be sure of that yet, and there was no mistaking her rakishness. 'I don't like the look of her either, sir,' says I to the skipper. 'But isn't there something wrong with her forrard? She appears to be under a jury bowsprit?'

"He levelled the telescope, and sung out, 'Yes, I see it now. She's lost her bowsprit, and has got a boom rigged out, and a jib set upon it. I don't know what her game is, I am sure. She looks to be after us, it strikes me.

Better not wait to make certain. Get the foreroyal loosed and set the foretopmast stunsail.'

"This was done, but if it helped our barque at all it didn't appear to slow the approach of the stranger. Seeing this our skipper fell into a funk. He ordered the lower and topgallant stunsails to be set, and through it we washed, every stoop of the bows sending the foam boiling and flying over the spritsail yard, whilst it was as much as two men could do, with a third standing by, to steer her. But it was no good. The brig—for a brig she proved—was sweeping up to us like a witch, and the nearer she drew the less we liked her appearance, I mean as regards our safety for as to her hull, why, I never saw a lovelier clipper in all my life; the loss of her bowsprit spoilt her; yet you scarcely noticed that in the beauty of her lines and shape, the perfect cut of her canvas, and the grace of her nobly-stayed masts bearing their cotton-white cloths aloft, till your eye came to royal stunsails pulling at the slender booms on the top-gallant yards, and skysails crowning the tapering sticks topped by trucks that shone in the sun like silver dollars.

"Well, she held on all, and we held on all, till she was abreast of us and within hailing distance, and then she shortened sail, whilst some one standing on her lee rail sung out to us to heave to. We could now see that she was full of men and pierced for several guns, though only the muzzles of two of them were visible, one of these pointing dead at us. Our skipper made no sign, on which we were again hailed to heave to, or 'If you don't we shall fire into you,' was the cry. This regularly scared our old man, for we were without guns, and much too few to have done anything with such a ship-load of armed ruffians as that brig carried, and so he ordered the stunsails to be hauled down, and the barque to be hove

to. The brig now backed her maintopsail, and no sooner were both vessels at a stand when a boat shoved off from the stranger, and I counted no less than sixteen men in her, each fellow armed to the teeth, and the chap steering her in the stern-sheets with a cutlass by his side, and a couple of pistols stuck in a broad yellow belt round him. This man was a tall, powerfully built fellow in half-boots and a rough coat, and a face fierce as old Nick's, with tremendous whiskers and moustache. He came clambering over the side the moment the bowman hooked on, but the rest of the beauties remained in the boat, stared at by all our men, who, as you may reckon, had remained on deck ever since it had got noised about that we were being chased; and it was now about one bell in the afternoon. Well, the chap with the whiskers, after a polite salute with his thumb to the brim of his hat, which a good deal eased our minds, sings out through his nose—

“‘Who's the cap'n of this vessel?’

“The skipper answers, ‘I am.’

“‘Then,’ says the other, putting his hand in his pocket and pulling out a small canvas bag, with which he walks up to the quarter-deck capstan as he speaks, ‘I'm in want of a bowsprit, as you can see, and I've come to buy yours. This here bag is full of English guineas,’ he says, ‘and I calculate when you come to count 'em you'll find the value in 'em of two such sticks as I see yonder,’—squinting forrards as he spoke.

“Our skipper stared at him, and cried out, ‘Bowsprit? I can't sell you my bowsprit, sir! You might as well ask me for my keel.’

“‘Look here,’ said the other sternly, ‘I've come for your bowsprit, and I mean to have it. If you will let me, I'll pay for it and take it as an honest man should;

if not—' and here he points significantly to his boat. 'You understand me,' he goes on; 'make up your mind, and be quick about it, for there are good reasons why it don't sarve my turn to hang about in these waters.'

"What could our skipper do? There was the brig to windward, with her rails black with heads watching us; and a whole crowd of desperadoes over the side, ready to swarm aboard and pistol us out of hand at the first signal from their whiskered leader.

"'Well,' says our captain, drawing a face as long as the main-to'-bowline, 'one needs must go where the devil drives, and since you *will* have my bowsprit,' says he, 'why, I suppose it must go.'

"'Take the money, anyhow,' says the other, shoving the bag into his hand, and, jumping on to the bulwarks, he sings out some orders to his chaps below. In a trice they were on deck, leaving one man in the boat. They tumbled forward, and then I witnessed one of the smartliest rushed jobs I ever saw. They had brought luff-tackles and whatever else they wanted with them, and asked us for nothing. They let go all the jibboom gear, rigged in the boom, then secured a luff-tackle to the foremast head, and hooked it on to a strop on the flying jibboom. They then guyed the jibboom to the catheads, and taking the tackle fall to the forecastle capstan, ran the jibboom up as a derrick with a second luff-tackle made fast to it for the bowsprit. When all was ready they hove the bowsprit out, and lowered it away over board carefully, that our headrails, figurehead, and so on, shouldn't be injured, having already taken care to secure our foremast by a tackle belonging to us, and to make the stays fast to the knightheads. Then, jumping into their boat, they took the bowsprit and jibboom in tow, and off they started for the brig, which when she had



hoisted the spars aboard squared away her yards and stood west-nor'-west."

"And who the deuce was she?" asked some one.

"Why," replied the yarner, "our skipper afterwards informed me that the whiskered man, just before he went over the side, told him that the brig was a slaver, and at that moment full to the hatches; that she had lost her bowsprit in a squall; that in that trim she stood fair to be overhauled by any cruiser that came across her; and that as he—for the whiskered man turned out to be her captain—didn't dare call into St. Helena for a new spar, he made up his mind to buy or steal the bowsprit and jibbooms out of the first vessel he encountered. I don't say," continued the speaker, lifting his glass and looking round upon the company over it, 'that this yarn is as curious as the one that went before it; but I reckon it's pretty singular."

"There's a great deal of cheek among sailormen," said a short, red-faced man, wiping his forehead. "That there story of the bowsprit puts the recollection of as imperant a job as ever I heard of into my head. I was ordinary seaman at the time, aboard a ship that had been hired by Government as a transport, and there was two or three hundred wessels all lying together. We had been lying there so long that provisions had grown scarce—leastways, they was scarce enough in our fore-castle. Little schooners and the likes of such craft would come up to trade with brandy, tobacco, fresh meat, and so on; but so far as we men went, our 'lowance got drier and drier, and we'd find ourselves pining for the cut of something fresh, till I allow we came pretty nigh to the feelin's of carrion crows. Well, one day I was one of a boat's crew that rowed our cap'n on a visit to a ship lying half a mile off. On our way he passed a

little trading schooner, over whose stern there was hanging a great piece of fresh beef, about forty pound of it. As we went by we all looked at it with languishin' eyes as if we were sharks, and so we did when we returned, but nothing was said until after we had been aboard some time, when a man—an able seaman named Joe Hall, as genteel a lookin' sailor as ever bit a chew out of a plug—says to me—

“ ‘Harry, did ye see that bit of beef?’ ”

“ ‘Of course I did,’ says I.

“ ‘I’ve been a puzzling my head,’ he says, ‘how we’re to get it, but at last I have it.’ And, beckoning to the others, he whispers this here plot to ’em. You must first know it was customary among the captains to let their crews pay each other visits—there being no shore-going—a few men at a time ; and Joe and another had got leave that evening to go aboard a vessel called the *Susan Hopkins*. The habit was for the men to row their shipmates over, and bring ’em back again. Well, Joe’s scheme was for us to row him aboard the schooner where the beef was, and his orders to us was that when he was aboard we were to let the boat drop on to the vessel’s quarter, for the meat hung on the starboard side, right under it, and to stand by and catch it when it fell. He wouldn’t explain more, because, says he, ‘I shall have to invent my plans as I go along ;’ but, in order to make sure of our being able to drop the boat right under the beef, he told us to bend a spare line on to the painter ready. Well, when the time arrived he steps into the boat dressed up to the nines, in a frock-coat, billycock hat, and good pantaloons ; ‘For I’m to be skipper of the *Horsleydown*,’ says he, ‘and I mustn’t injure that gent by not appearing ’spectable.’ Where he got his pants from I don’t know, but his westcut and frock-coat he had

borrowed from the steward. Well, off we started, and put him aboard the schooner, which had the bit of beef still hanging, and when he was on deck we dropped down under the beef, and there we hung waiting for the next thing to happen.

"And this is what it was: Joe walks up to the capt'n of the schooner and represents himself as master of the *Horsleydown*, and he tells him that his motive in coming aboard is to find out what there is for sale, and the prices of the articles he wants. On this the capt'n of the schooner grows mighty civil, and offers Joe a cigar, and there we see 'em stumping up and down, smokin' and conversin', and Joe actin' his part to the manner born. Still we couldn't make out how all this here manœuvrin' was going to get us the beef, till presently Joe comes right aft to the taffrail, as if he had a mind to have a look at the whole length of the schooner, and sittin' down just where the beef was made fast to, and gazin' aloft, as if admirin' the spars, he quietly puts his hand behind him, snicks the stuff the beef was hung by, with a knife he had in his sleeve, and down drops the forty pound of beef into our boat, and we instantly covers it up with a tarpaulin. And all the while, as I live to tell it, the master of the schooner was within five foot of him, and looking at him as he stared aloft admirin' the rigging. When he had cut away the beef there was nothing more to do; so, promising to call next day, and accepting of another cigar, Joe steps into the boat, and we returned to our vessel with beefsteaks enough in tow to last all hands a fortnight's gorgin'."

"Yes," said a grizzly old sailor, who had listened very attentively to this yarn, "there's no questioning the fact that mariners have plenty of cheek. And I often think they'd be a terrible dangerous body of people if it warn't

for the hinstincts of discipline they somehow get hold of which keeps 'em going straight, just as rails do a locomotive engine, though if the engine runs off ye know the splutter and hullabaloo and bust-up as follows. I never thought of sailors as dangerous till I was at Hitchiboo" (so pronounced by the grizzly sailor), "taking in gewhaner" (guano). "There were five hundred vessels there, ranging from a thousand down to seventy ton, and there'd never be less than twelve hundred men at work on the island, that wasn't above forty acres in extent. There was a rush for the stuff, for a brig had brought some to Liverpool as ballast, not knowing its value, and there it was analysed and its advantages understood, and it got to fetch four shillings a pound. Well, the crews had it all their own way; the capt'ns were too few to call their noses their own. Stages were rigged up to save the boats from the surf, and all day long the boats were coming and going with loads of gewhaner, which, as most of the company is doubtless aweer, consists of decayed matter, and comprises heggs, penguins, young birds, seals, and such stuff, all perished and layin' originally on this island in layers seventy foot deep. It was a fine sight to witness the five hundred vessels, nearly all of 'em British, anchored in crowds near the island; the sky very blue overhead, the African coast standing low and sandy, and glaring just beyond the rocks where the gewhaner was, and the stuff itself alive with seamen working at it with pickaxes and tumbling it into bags. Lawless they was. I'll give ye a notion. On the passage to the island the master of a small barque had knocked the cook's eye out with a tar brush. When the vessel arrived and the crew went ashore they told some of the men of the occurrence. Well, later on, the captain of the barque landed, and as he walked to where his own crew

was they tipped the wink to the others to let 'em know that this was the man who had knocked the cook's eye out. On this a number of sailors ran for the captain, who turned and bolted. Nearly all the island joined in the chase, armed with decayed sealskins, rotten penguins, and the like. The captain came rushing down to the landing-stage, where there was a boat with a boy in her. He jumped into the water and swam to her, and the men bawled to the boy to heave him overboard, which the young rascal actually tried to do. The sailors then seized the painter, and were hauling the boat in when the captain cut the line, and so saved his life; for there's not the least doubt that, if they'd ha' caught him, they'd ha' pelted him to death with the filthy things they held in their hands.

"I recollect another case. The crew of a ship was ashore, and they was to have their breakfast sent 'em. When the time came the breakfast wasn't ready, and the captain went to the galley to inquire the reason. The cook sarsed him; words flew, and the cook out with his knife. On this the master called to the second mate for help, and between 'em they put the cook in irons. Well, the news of this got took ashore to the crew, who were hungrily waitin' for their breakfast, and the notion they arrived at was that the captain had clapped the cook in irons expressly that no breakfast should be sent to the men. They talked about this among the others, and when the captain came ashore I'm blowed if they didn't collar him, and march him up to where they had turned to and constructed a sort o' hall of justice by piling up gewhaner bags. Larf! I thought I should ha' cracked my sides. I never see such a thing. Two sailors was appointed to sit as judges and twelve others were converted into a jury. Luckily for the captain, there

were men aboard ships lying close to his vessel who had seen the cook's behaviour and knew the truth, and they volunteered as witnesses, and it was through them that the captain was acquitted; but had the verdict gone the other way, it's fifty to one he'd been killed. Yes," continued the speaker, looking into his empty glass and then pulling out his watch, "sailors are a useful body of men, but there's no questioning their cheek."

"What we've been a listening to," said a fine-looking old fellow, who preserved the completest nautical exterior I ever observed in a man, "concerning that there island of Hitchiboo, and the behaviour of the seamen who had their captains at their mercy, reminds me that a skipper may sometimes be disciplined by his crew into views and conduct not only good for himself and good for the forecastle, but good for the owners and everybody as has anything to do with the ship. When I was two and twenty years old I was lodging at a boarding-house in Port Glasgow, along with five other seamen, all about my own age. We got hard up, and went down to look for a ship, and found one of seven hundred ton, bound round Cape Horn, that wanted a crew. She looked a tidy little vessel enough, but when we came to make inquiries into the captain's character we found he'd got the name of a regular out-and-outer—a complete nigger-driver, a born hazer, as though all his sea eddication had come from down East. Well, afore going any further we made up our minds to talk the job over; and so we did, an' I think we should have talked ourselves out of the scheme of shipping in that vessel altogether if it hadn't been that none of us was worth as much as 'ud buy a farden's-worth of silver spoons, so that it was impossible for us to stop ashore any longer. Another reason, however, that shoved us forward was a determination that had

entered my head, and which I had explained to my mates, and said I would be responsible for, providing they all backed me. Ay, they all said they'd back me if it was as fur as the bottom of the ocean.

"Well, we signed articles and took our traps aboard, six of us, and we found six more there, two of 'em ordinary seamen, and two apprentices besides, who were just out of their time, and were men and as good as men, so that in all we mustered a crew of fourteen souls, none of 'em exceeding four and twenty years of age, and active—— Well, well, if you ask me to show you the likes of them now, I'm sure I don't know to what part of the world I could direct you. The apprentices, who had sailed with the captain before, told us all they knew about him, how he was all agreeableness till the ship was out of soundings, and how, when once he had got his crew into blue water, he rounded upon 'em as if he had been changed into another man altogether. This set the others of the crew pricking up their ears, so that, as you may reckon, when I acquainted them with my detarmination they agreed to back me as the others had done, and we were thus as united as the yarns in a rope, or as them birds and marmozeets and mice as travels about the country under the name of happy families. Well, we proceeded on our voyage, and everything went on very well indeed. But at last we were out of soundings. I was sitting eating my breakfast in the forecastle, when I hears the mate's step coming along.

"'Now, boys,' said I, 'the time's arrived. You're all ready, I hope?'

"'All ready,' was the answer.

"'Then,' says I, 'one of you had best shove his head through the scuttle, ready for me to signal to in case the necessity might arise;' and so saying, I goes on deck,

just as the mate comes to the hatch to call all hands. The skipper was walking aft. He was a fierce-looking fellow, with a scowl like a thunder-squall; strongly built, with a voice like a fog-horn; and I see him now, dressed in a seedy old pilot coat, a fur cap, and half Wellingtons, with the bottoms of the trousers stuck into them. When he saw me coming he stood and stared at me with all his might, thinking, I dare say, that whatever my errand might be, he could do no harm in trying to alarm me. I stepped up to him and says, 'Captain,' I says, 'I should like to say a word to you, sir?'

"'What do you want?' he bawls.

"'Why, sir,' says I, 'us men understand that it's your custom to keep your crew on deck all day. What we want to know is, if you'll let us have watch and watch?'

"'What's that you say?' he roars.

"'Why, sir,' says I, 'I thought,' I says, 'that I had made myself understood when I first spoke. But since you want it over again, why,' says I, 'I'll say it. What we want to know is, if you'll let us have watch and watch?'

"'You'd ha' supposed he had fallen mad. He swore and cursed at me, calling me all the names he could put his tongue to, on which, growing angry myself, I says, 'Look here, captain, I shipped as a man, and I've come to speak to you as a man, and I expect to be treated as a man. The crew know their duty, and you'll find them as fine a body of seamen as ever captain had under them; but they don't mean to be kept on deck all day, muckin' and grubbin' about, simply because it's your pleasure that they should be on deck. So what I've got to ask you again is, Will you let us have watch and watch?' Here he whips out with more bad language, enough to stun one, the mate standing by all the while, looking on and wondering. 'There's no use, captain,'



I says, 'in talking to me in that fashion. The crew are resolved, and either you give us watch and watch as we demand, or else head her for the nearest home port, for, by thunder, we won't work her another mile of the outward passage.'

"He turned so white with rage, and made a movement so full of threatening, that I considered it about time that I was backed; so I just looked over my shoulder towards the fore scuttle, where I noticed a head watching us; and I'd hardly done that when all the crew came tumbling up and running aft, and there we stood in a body looking at the skipper. The rage went out of his white face when he saw this, and another sort of expression came into it. He glared at us a minute, and then, catching the mate, by the arm, he walks with him into the cabin. There they consulted, and, after a bit, the mate comes out and says, 'Go below the watch,' which, of course, meant that the skipper had caved in. Now, why have I spun this yarn?" continued the speaker, looking around; "why, just to tell you that that ship turned out to be the happiest vessel I was ever afloat in. We were like a family. The captain never had occasion to speak a hard word to us, because we were such a crew that there was no fault to be found with us. We knew it when we shipped, we knew it when we made up our minds to have our way in the matter of watch and watch, and we were the bolder to claim what we reckoned to be the treatment we had a right to by understanding our merits as a ship's company. To show you what our smartness was—it wasn't a week after I had talked to the captain that a gale bust down upon us. We was under all plain sail at the time; yet in twenty-five minutes we had her snugged down to close-reefed fore and main topsails, mizzen topsail ready to stow, courses and all other sails

furled. Of course the captain was proud of us. What I say is, there are masters of vessels who want disciplining more than their crews. It's all take and no give among 'em, and though I'm no advocate for hinsubordination, yet I'm of opinion that if sailors took it upon themselves to teach masters their duty towards the forecandle—I mean them, of course, as needs such teaching—it would not only be good for the men, but very useful as a matter of eddication to the captains."

A few of the seamen uttered some polite murmurs of applause on hearing these sentiments, but it was manifest to me from their appearance that these were gentlemen who, when at sea, had served as foremast hands. Others, who had been mates, looked squarely at the speaker, as if they would imply, by the expression of their faces, a disdainful challenge of his opinions; but, fortunately, it was a rule of this assembly that no arguments were permitted—gentlemen might convey their views in speeches, but any one uttering a controversial observation calculated to lead to interruptions, and what a retired boatswain called "a general jaw," was fined sixpence.

After a brief pause three or four men in a corner of the room began a conversation, and this led to a small man with white hair and whiskers telling the following personal experience: "Yes, yes," he began, referring to a previous observation; "there's no mistake about it. Men have done things in their day which, when they come to get advanced and to look back upon, are enough to make every hair they've got on their heads stand up. One job of that kind I can recall, and I'll tell it ye just as it happened. It was at Quebec. Our ship was lying off a dump-head with any number of balks of timber betwixt her and the dump-head. Five of us was going ashore that night, and we all had a mind to try the flavour of a

public-house that stood on top of a cliff right abreast of the ship. Now, the cliff was seventy to eighty foot high, and you got on top of it by a ladder that had steps like stairs and one rail to hold by; but the ladder was almost up and down, and was certainly not what a timid young female would have been glad to venture on. Well, when the evening came, we dressed ourselves and got ashore, and went up this ladder to the public-house. We had several dollars in money among us, and it was our intention to enjoy ourselves. The landlord was a very smiling, obliging man, and he had two darters—well, perhaps I wouldn't think them fine gals now, though in those days I was easy to please, and found a deal of beauty in anything that had the word female wrote under it—he had two darters, I say, and they both sang first-class, and there being a pianey in the room we had a proper concert. When the singing was over I was asked to dance; and I turned to and shuffled away till I perspired myself pretty nigh sober. As for dancing, I never could get enough of it. I had learnt the hornpipe off a second mate who had been a professional dancer, and whenever I felt my toes I'd keep all on slapping away, and that's what I did that night, which, spite of the quantity of lush I'd swallowed, accounted for my being the soberest of the party when twelve o'clock struck. On that hour striking, the landlord flung open the door and bundled us all out into the night.

“It was pitch dark, and had been raining. Two of my mates, who were intoxicated, were for turning in on the wet grass. There was only one way to the ship, and that was down the ladder; but where that ladder was could no more be imagined in that there blackness than you could have told what time it was by feeling of the case of your watch with your fingers. ‘Well,’ thinks I to

myself, as I stands peering into the dark, 'here's a pretty job; we're bound to get aboard somehow or other, for it'll never do to lie out in the damp here till it comes daybreak;' so I says to my mates, 'Stop where you are whilst I go and find the ladder, and don't move away till you hear me holler, and then come to me.' On that I goes down on my hands and knees, and creeps to the edge of the cliff. There was a lot of furze bushes growing on the edge, and a short way down, and how it was that I didn't fall over in shoving through them bushes to feel for the edge of that cliff I can't tell ye; but I say that when I think of it now my hair stands up. It was pitch dark, mind, and there was I crawling along searching for the ladder. It was the drink that made me so daring. Had I put my hand on anything that would have given, down I should have plumped, a distance of betwixt seventy and eighty feet. Well, first of all I creeps along to the left and then to the right, and so I goes on, until, after groping for about twenty minutes, I see the ends of the ladder sticking up against the faint sky right in front of me. On this I sings out to my mates, for I dursn't leave the place for fear of losing the ladder again, and after a bit I heard them coming, the two who were not so drunk as the others dragging their shipmates along 'midst a deal o' cussing and spluttering. When they arrived it was plain the two men were too drunk to go down the ladder themselves, and the others not sober enough to help 'em; so there was nothing for it but for me to carry 'em down, which I did on my back one at a time, they holding on round my neck in a loving embrace that came pretty nigh to strangling me. The others then descended, for they were sober enough to hold on to the rail, and when we came to the dump-head we got on to a couple o' barks of timber and paddled ourselves off to the

ship. And mighty pleased we were to get aboard. Yes, I often think of myself groping in the blackness along the edge of that seventy-foot cliff. A man changes so as he advances that when he looks back he may well reckon that the young fellow he remembers as doing this, that, and the other mad thing, and getting into all sorts of tremendous scrapes, and cheekin' his captains and fightin' with foreign policemen and chucking Chaneymen out of their windows, must have been merely an acquaintance, and not himself."

"Sailors have charmed lives," said a stout old fellow, in a hoarse voice. "If they hadn't they'd be annually perishing as thick as leaves fall off a tree in autumn. For everything's in a conspiracy against 'em, including their own behaviour. D'ye see this here leg?" he exclaimed, thrusting forth a limb that might have passed for gouty, so handsomely did it fill up the trousers that covered it. "Who'd suppose," he continued, slapping it vehemently, "that this here leg had once been broken? Who'd suppose that this here blooming lump of a leg"—fetching it a whack at every word—"had once upon a time—— But stay, till ye hear the story." He took a pull at his glass, and proceeded:—

"One September day there was a ship becalmed on what's termed the polar verge of the South-east trades. About three-quarters of a mile away from her lay a derelict with fore and main topmasts gone, but apparently tight, for she floated with a good height of side out of the sea. The tackles at the davits were overhauled to the water's edge, and there was no sign of a boat to be seen.

"‘She's a lumping vessel to be knocking about in that there fashion, right in the road of navigation,’ says the captain of the ship to his chief mate. ‘Why, she'd

be as bad as an island to run into on a dark night. It's a duty that all shipmasters owe to navigators to clear the road of these hencumbrances whenever they can; and as the weather promises to keep fine, suppose,' says he, 'you go aboard of her and set her on fire?'

"No sooner said than done. Hands were called aft, one of the quarter-boats lowered, the mate jumped into her, and was rowed aboard the wreck. Well, on getting over the side, the mate and those of the men as followed him found themselves on the deck of a big, flush-decked, roomy ship. A portion of her bulwarks was gone, and there was a raffle of gear upon the rails, and it was also plain that she had been swept by a sea, for there was only a fragment of the galley left, and the wheel, binnacle, scuttle-butts, and so forth were all gone. The main hatches were off, and the mate, looking down the hold, saw that the vessel was in ballast. He went into the cabin and overhauled the place for her papers, but found nothing in that way. There were bedclothes, sea-chests, coats, hats, and other matters of that kind knocking about, but nothing valuable, nothing worth bringing away. So their next business was to fire the ship, and this they did by splitting up a few bunk bottom boards and making a bonfire in one of the berths where there were curtains and other things of a combustious nature to catch fast; and then, first waiting to see the fire get a good hold, they left the cabin and came on deck to the gangway, to drop into the boat. Two of 'em had already scrambled down when the mate, holding up his fingers, sings out—

"'Hush! isn't that a man's voice calling?'

"They strained their ears, and then one of 'em hollers, 'There it is again, sir; it comes from forrard.'

"All ran towards the forecastle. The forehatch was

open, and three of them looked down it, whilst another went to the fore scuttle. But the hollerin' came from the bottom of the hold under the forehatch. There they could just see the figure of a man lying helpless on the ballast, and imploring them in the name of God to carry him out of that. In an instant lines were thrown down, a couple of fellows descended, and the man was hoisted on deck and conveyed in a hurry to the boat, for already the smoke was coming up thick out of the companion, and there was no telling what explosives there might be stowed away in the lazarette. Well, when the man was got aboard the ship he told his story, and it was this: that when the order had been given for the crew to take to the boats, the captain told 'em first to open all the hatches, that the vessel might sink out of the road. It was dark, in the middle of the night, and this man, in stepping across the deck, kicked against the coamings of the forehatch, and fell into the hold, where he lay—he couldn't tell how long—insensible. When he recovered his intellect he found his leg broken; he couldn't move an inch, and there he lay, as he reckoned, for three days and nights, endeavouring to reconcile himself to the idea of death, until he heard voices, and sung out. That man," said the narrator, looking round, "was me; and the leg he broke was this very hidetical blooming limb you're now beholding. Gentlemen, think of lying with a broken leg in the hold of a burning ship. Hang me, if it ain't a recollection to make a man perspire. Yes, Mr. Treenail, ye can touch the bell. Nautical memory gets too stimulating sometimes, and then it wants diluting."

## *JACK'S VIEW OF IT.*

IT is not long since that I looked into that little club which you have just read about. You will remember that it is held at a small hotel, and is composed chiefly of old retired mates and highly respectable elderly seamen, such as carpenters, sailmakers, boatswains, and the like, most of whom "knocked off," as they term it, years ago, though they still take an extremely intelligent interest in current maritime affairs. The room was pretty full when I entered, and all hands were hard at work arguing upon a topic which, after a few moments' listening, I easily discovered to be the withdrawal of a Shipping Bill, and the substitution of a Commission to inquire into the real legislative needs of the Merchant Service. The atmosphere was tolerably well charged with tobacco-smoke and the fumes arising from strong, gouty tumblers filled for the most part with hot rum-and-water. Through this fog loomed the figures of the inmates of the room, not the least square and sturdy being those who were the most ancient; whilst the white hair, the bald head, or the jolly red face took a deeper accentuation of hue from the peculiar character of the haze. I seated myself in a vacant chair, happily close to the open window, and listened with much interest to the discussion that was now fairly under weigh.



"You may depend upon it," exclaimed an old fellow, speaking slowly and with a tremor in his voice like the thrilling of a royal backstay to a breeze, "that no good 'll come of commissions or any devices of that sort if sailors aren't brought in and allowed to give their opinions, and influence them as has the drawing up of the laws for seafaring people. What do landsmen know of the calling of the sea? Only ask? What do they know, I say? A man may be as clever as William Shakespeare's reckoned to have been; but if he's never been to sea then he's bound to know nothing about it; and if he had as much brains as 'ud fill this here room, with a forehead as high as from the floor to the ceiling, spite of it all he never could give an opinion that 'ud do any sailor a substantial service."

"You're quite right, Mr. Walker," said another old fellow, who had listened with much complacency and many nods. "Take undermanning. Who's to understand *that* excepting a sailor? I could draw ye all a pretty picture of the state we was once in aboard a thousand-ton ship because we was short-handed. Yet, short-handed as we was, we were a large company compared to what's now carried by vessels double that ship's size. You hear nowadays of steamers leaving dock—steamers of twelve hundred and fourteen hundred ton—with six fore-castle hands; three of a watch, mates! think of that! one at the wheel, one on the look-out, and one to make or shorten sail, 'cordin' to the weather. Eh? how does that fancy suit ye? But it's true though. When I went to sea the Navigation Laws was in force; and I'll tell you what them laws did for us men; if a British ship carried foreign seamen as well as Englishmen, she'd have to take one British for every twenty tons. Now reckon what crew that 'ud give to a thousand-ton ship outside

the foreign element. A watch was a ship's company in my day, mates. Sailors was thought something of then. They were properly legislated for."

"I understand," exclaimed a quiet-looking, middle-aged man, "that the United States has gone in for a sort of navigation law for the protection of their merchant officers.\* It's now ordered that all the officers of vessels belonging to the States must be citizens of the States."

"Well, and who's a-going to blame the United States for looking after her own people?" exclaimed an 'old man sitting near me. "Ain't it better to hear what Mr. Jackson there has mentioned than read advertisements from British owners for furrin captains and mates, saying that none else is asked to apply?"

"I don't want to speak ill of foreign sailors," said another; "but I'll tell you what—when foreigners form part of a crew there's always plenty of insubordination and confusion when bad weather comes on suddenly, and orders have to be given and executed quickly."

"They say as English sailors are no longer the men they was, and that's why Dutchmen is preferred," said a feeble old voice from a corner.

"Well," replied a man who answered to the name of George, "I dunno that that's to be contradicted. It seems true that the custom now is for a 'cap'n. to ship any sort of a crew he can get in the first place; and then for that crew to desert that a worse lot still, pierhead loafers, and the like, may be put in their room. I've heard again and again of men actually shipping as competent sailors without knowing the name of a block or a rope aboard the ship, without being able to splice, steer, or roll up a sail. If it's really come to such as these, better ship

\* Written in 1884.

foreigners, say I; for we're still supposed to be a maritime country, you know."

"Well," said a man, "I don't want to contradict anybody straight; but I'm not going to let any one tell me that English sailors aren't still a good body o' men, and a sight better than the likeliest furriners goin', without denying of it. Why furriners is preferred is obvious; they're willin' to go for less money, and they'll put up with food you couldn't get an English sailor to look at. It was always the same. I very well recollect hearin' my father say that foreign sailors received twenty-five shillings, and were thankful for it, when British sailors received fifty shillings. That 'ud be in heighteen thirty and thereabouts. I went to sea in heighteen forty-four. English sailors were then getting fifty to fifty-five shillings a month—mates £5, second mates £3 10s., carpenters £4 to £5; and I remember hearing that victualling per man came to from a shilling to fourteen pence per day, and in the cabin for officers eighteen pence to two shillings. But what were furriners getting? Sailors' wages was £1 8s., the mate got £2, and the second mate and carpenter £1 12s. The men lived on sixpence a day each, and in the cabin on a shilling. That's as true as I'm sitting here. It's always been so. Furriners 'll undersell us Englishmen whether at sea or ashore; and employers, in order to excuse themselves for availin' themselves of the very cheap sarvices of Dutchmen, 'll turn to and say it's because Englishmen aren't the men they was, which, to my way of thinking, is all lies."

"Well," said a man who looked as if he had been a mate, "I don't fancy any good can come by arguing about foreign sailors. It's undoubtedly hard that English seamen should be unable to get ships because

there are scores of Germans and Norwegians, and such people, willing to go for less money, or because they don't kick up the row English seamen make when they're wronged. But you'll get no statesman to recommend the House of Commons to stop persons, whether they're shipowners, lawyers, or tailors, from employing anybody they please, from a Russian Finn to a Kanaka; and as we're a nation of free-traders, it's proper it should be so."

"That's right enough, Mr. Bloomer," said the man named George. "If I wur a rich man and wanted to have a nigger flunkey instead of a white man, it 'ud be hard upon me if I wasn't allowed to because there was white men seeking situations of that kind. No use of jawing about furriners—consider the question of overloading, that's what's got to be dealt with; but it's only sailors as are really fit to talk about it, first of all because they understand it, and next because it's the chief threat against their lives. There's no blinking the truth: all that owners think of nowadays is carrying capacity. Everything must give way to that. The job is to contrive a vessel able to be filled up to a point that 'ud sink proper-shaped ships. Never mind her sea-goin' qualities. Insurance 'll look after them."

"Ay, it's the proper loading of ships that's got to be looked after; that's a matter right ahead of all other seafaring subjects," observed a yellow-visaged man, with his hair in ringlets, and who spoke through his nose. "Till *that's* settled all else 'll be adrift, and sailors 'll go on being drowned as though commerce couldn't be carried on without their dying any more than people could be fed without loss o' life among bullocks and sheep. I'll tell ye a fact. It's of a small timberman as arrived home after encountering the roughest weather

you can imagine. She'd a deck-load, and when it was removed rats' nests was found under the wood with young rats in 'em, all as dry as my cap there. She was under two hundred ton. Big ships which had made the same passage in the same weather was pretty nigh drowned: they lost deck-cargoes, sails, boats, and a deal besides. What's the meaning of such things, if they don't refer to stowage and seaworthiness?"

"With regard to overloading," said Mr. Bloomer, "no good will be done until the Government insists that the maximum dead-weight capacity of a ship shall be fixed at such a percentage of her register tonnage—fifty per cent. I'd call it—as should make her buoyant and fit to encounter, not such gales of wind as nowadays sink the ocean-tramps out of hand, but hurricanes which few of our cargo boats could look at, though in my day all the notice ships, from the Indiaman down to the little fruiter, took of them was quietly heaving to till the foul weather got tired."

"Ay! and after overloading comes shifting," observed a man who had hitherto been a listener, though looking eagerly all the while. "We want a statesman as 'll understand that the life of everybody aboard a ship isn't more in the hands of the merchant who insists on loading her down till she's pretty near out of sight than at the mercy of the stevedore who stows the cargo. Take coals—a cargo that's constantly shifting. Will any man tell me that the shifting boards which are used stop the coal from rolling over till the list of the vessel brings the water to the main-hatch? Bulkheads might be of use, maybe, but what's really required is ships fitted to load full. Then there can't be any shifting."

"I'll tell you how a deal of mischief is done," said a bald-headed carpenter. "A vessel in picking up a

cargo 'll go to ports where the produce is different—some being light, some the reverse. Heavy dead weight 'll be stowed solid in the ends of a ship, and light stuff will be put just where the dead weight ought to be. Are such things known to the representatives of the people who have to vote on maritime matters? I say they aren't. They're formiliar no doubt to the ship-owners as sit in Parliament, but if Jack's not represented by anybody else, he's not represented by them, and so I tells you. What's a stevedore but a landsman, and what's his duty but to call for orders and give satisfaction to his employer by filling the ship with more than she ought to hold. What does he care about trim, even if he knows anything about it? His business is to make haste, for a tide's a tide, and to save a tide there are people who'll lose a ship and all hands in her. I read a piece in a newspaper some time ago, about a steamer having been seen off Flamborough Head. She was heading south, with her starboard rail under water; engine working slowly. She looked, said the newspaper, as if she had shifted her cargo. That's what it's come to. Owners might say, 'Oh, yes, but how many steamers do you come across steaming along with one side under water;' to which I answers, 'It's only very few as keep afloat; the mass of 'em goes down.' ”

“Food's another matter I think it is about time the House of Commons should look at, if it's their intention to do right by sailors,” said a man who was evidently still at sea, though pretty well on in years. “I don't mean to say it's worse now than it used to be; it's always been the same, saving the stopping of a man's grog, and the introduction of the messes they puts up in red cans and calls fresh meat. I've got a bit of a log-book of my own at home, in which I wrote down

some hevidence I once came across relating to the food as was given the sailors when I first went to sea, and the price of it. Two pounds of salted beef or pork was given to each man a day, and that was put down as worth heightpence. Then he was allowed a pound and a half of bread, valued at twopence halfpenny; then there came tea and flour and suet and sugar, and a half-pint of rum at two and sixpence per gallon. In addition, there was potatoes, peas, and molasses. This has been going on for years, only that they've stopped the rum without putting anything else in its place. I wouldn't quarrel with the food if it was good. But how often is it good? Surveyors are supposed to inspect it, but they don't; they take a glass of wine with the captain in the cabin instead, and leave to the sailor the job of finding out that the beef's been in pickle so long that it's only fit to make bricks of, and that the ship's bread's of the worst quality as could be baked. I allow it would be impossible for surveyors to inspect, cask by cask, all the meat that's put aboard ships for the use of the crews; but what I contend is, that sailors ought to be armed with more power than they have for punishing owners who, not being able to starve them by putting no stores aboard, do the next thing to it, and ship provisions which, if members of Parliament could only see samples of 'em, they'd never believe it possible human beings could subsist upon."

"The Board of Trade has shown itself willing, but more than willingness is wanted if any good's to come from interference," exclaimed the old fellow near me, who had previously spoken. "I quite allow the impossibility of a surveyor going through a ship's stores cask by cask; but there are things he could see to if he'd only keep his eye lifting. Boats are one of them. If they're

bright with paint and neat in canvas covers it's all right, though they may prove no better than sieves when lowered. Another thing; it's not long since that a vessel went ashore, and it was discovered that she had only one compass, that was fixed close to an iron steering wheel, and there was not even a deep-sea lead aboard. Then there's steering gear. It's not half enough looked after. I've heard of ships broaching to six points, with three or four men at the helm, because the gear wasn't powerful enough for an Atlantic sea."

"And take compasses," said a man whose name I don't know, but who had once told me he gave up the sea as second mate at the age of five and forty; "there are owners who won't allow their compasses to be adjusted on the ground that it takes too much time! Think of steering a vessel by a compass nine or ten points out. I always understood that the law obliged vessels to have their compasses adjusted every twelve months, and if they carried over a certain number of passengers it must be done every voyage. But who's going to tell me that this important and necessary law's enforced? You have ships not only built of iron, but loaded up with iron goods of all kinds. How can you expect the compasses to be right if they're not adjusted before sailing?"

"Yes," here exclaimed the man named George, "and I'll name another matter that wants putting to rights, and that all the year round is costin' more lives than all the other pints we've been discussing put together, and that's collision." A loud "Hear, hear" from all parts of the room greeted this. "There's been all sorts o' suggestions made," he continued, "respectin' this matter; but I'll tell you what my notion is, and I've been to sea long enough to believe I'm not fur wrong; collisions arises



from the want of a proper look-out. If they was always happening in fogs, why then I'd own that fogs was the cause, and that something better than kickin' up a horrible and distractin' row with whistles and the things that's used ought to be invented ; but they're happening a good bit more often in fine, clear weather ; and I say it's because a proper look-out isn't kept. And why ? Because ships go to sea so ridicklously undermanned that the fellow who's stationed to look out is again and again called away to lend the one or two others as forms his watch a hand at setting or taking in a sail, or at some work that's too much for them. It was only yesterday that I was talking to a man who had just come fresh from the closest shave any fellow ever came clear of. The steamer was bound to Dunkirk. The weather was fine, and the sea smooth. Suddenly a big steamship comes bearing right down. The whistle was sounded continuously, but not the least notice was taken. There was no one on the bridge ; not a living creature visible. The steamer's engines were reversed full speed, and then the big 'un saw the other and put his helm hard a-starboard and stopped his engines. He turned out to be chockful of emigrants, but it was not by his management that what the newspapers would have called a dreadful disaster at sea was avoided."

"I'll top that by what happened to us not six months past," said a small, brown-faced man who sat drinking rum-and-water in a corner, and holding his glass as if it were a baby he was teaching to dance on his knee. "I was aboard a brig owned by me. We were off Lowestoft, the weather clear, and the sky full of stars. We were going along at the rate of six knots when my look-out reports a steamer's lights bearing about one point on the port bow and one mile and a half distant. She was

steaming at fully ten knots. We starboarded, and the steamer passed us within a couple of fathom. Nothing would be certainer than that there was no look-out kept on that steamer."

"Ay, there's no end to them expirriences," exclaimed a burly fellow sitting over against me. "Some months ago I read of a steamer making the passage from Rotterdam to the Tyne in thirty-five hours through a dense fog. Nothing 'll end collisions till this sort of thing is stopped."

"It 'ud be a beginning; but don't talk of *ending* collisions, Jacob," said a seaman sitting next the last speaker. "Ye'll never end 'em till first of all a good look-out is kept; next, till the law of nations makes it punishable to give a ship more than steerage-way in thick weather. Though I don't dislike the idea of obliging the owner of the vessel found guilty of causing the collision to forfeit his insurance."

"No, no," cried Mr. Bloomer, "that would be too hard upon the owners. Mustn't make them responsible for the faults of those they employ."

"But I would, though," said the other, with a defiant nod of the head; "and keep all on making them responsible till they shipped enough of a crew to make a look-out possible aboard their ships."

"In some steamers," observed a very old fellow, "the only look-out, I'm told, is the man at the wheel. His business is to stick to his course, and it's the duty of everybody else to get out of his way."

"I don't know," said the man named George, "that collisions 'ud be so fatal as they usually is if some statesman as takes an interest in the lives of sailors and passengers would pass a law to compel shipbuilders to make what's called water-tight bulkheads the contrivances

they're supposed to be. What, I ask, is the use of a ship bein' fitted with divisions when the first hole that's made in any one of 'em sinks her?"

"The long and short of it's this," said the yellow-visaged man: "ships go afloat so deep that a very few tons more's enough to sink 'em. Consequently, when a vessel gets holed in a compartment, the water that's taken in drowns her right away off, though all the other divisions may be dry as snuff. I tell you, bulkheads and a tribe of other matters all belong to overloading. End *that*, and sailors'll return to their old practice of living on the average pretty near as long as landsmen."

"But you must stop hurry in sailing too," said an old man, in a shrill voice. "I lost a son, a promising youth he was, in a steamer that should have been afloat at this hour if it wasn't that she belonged to a firm of greedy people. It was in the depth of winter; cargo was pitchforked into her, it wasn't stowed; the dock labourers got her to the basin for a midnight tide; all was confusion, the crew drunk, hatches open, bunkers choked with coals unstowed, the decks blocked with raffle—everything cruel and disgraceful. She encountered half a gale of wind and was never heard of more,—gentlemen, she foundered in weather that allowed smacks of twenty ton to keep the sea and to come home safe as I am now. There you get a frightful evil—hurry! hurry! hurry!" he half-screamed, raising his shaking hand; "but it's the hurry that drives men headlong to death—more murder-some than stabbing or shooting, for it's done deliberately by them as lie warm in their beds whilst their agents are thrusting captains, mates, and drunken crews out into the bitter frosty sea to live or perish as chance wills."

A silence followed this outbreak; I broke it by

asking Mr. Bloomer what, in his opinion, were the essential points to be considered in any legislative scheme that should have direct reference to the safety of life at sea. He answered, "There are older men than I present, persons of more experience than I can pretend to; but since you put the question to me I'll answer it, with submission to the judgment of those who hear me. First of all, overloading; that tops the list." ("Hear, hear," from all parts of the room, in all sorts of voices.) "Then there's stowage, which naturally belongs to the question of shifting. Then there's undermanning; under which head I place the question of look-out, which involves the matter of collision. Am I right?" ("Quite right" from all parts of the room.) "Then there's the incapacity of seamen—the turnpike men who are shipped and who don't know one end of a ship from t'other, though entered on the articles as A.B.'s." ("Hear, hear," from all the old men.) "Then comes what this gentleman here has just mentioned—hurry in sailing; and another point is the bad construction of ships as regards shape, material, and workmanship; that would bring in the question of bulkheads. There are other matters sailors feel the State should deal with, such as foreigners, apprentices, provisions, and so forth——" ("Ay, provisions, certainly," cried some one.) "But the points," said Mr. Bloomer, "I've named are those which I'm mistaken if all sailors aren't agreed in considering as the most important; and until these are looked into by competent men, by men who have been or who still are sailors—who thoroughly know the hidden part of the life and have suffered—and dealt with on their suggestions, you may rest assured that the figures which have been given as representing loss of life at sea will go on increasing, till Englishmen, unable to endure it, will put their foot

down and demand that the wrong done to simple sailors shall end once and for all."

A loud cheer followed this energetic speech, in the midst of which Mr. Bloomer quitted the room, followed by me, who was beginning to find the atmosphere growing rather too solid for my lungs.

## *THE ROMANCE OF THE DEEP.*

IT is difficult for a landsman to conceive that there is any romance left in the sea. Now and then, it is true, he meets in the public journals with a description of a dreadful wreck or a disastrous collision. But there is nothing picturesque, nothing with the true sentimental ring in these gigantic casualties; nothing to remind him of Marryat or Fenimore Cooper, or the wild romantic sea tales he read in his youth. To our fortunate generation of landsmen the idea of the sea is narrowed into fine steamers, swift passages, excellent fare, electric bells, and luxurious smoking-rooms. All the old interests are declared to be gone. There are no more letters of marque; no more pirates; no more slavers; no more swaggering, handsome privateersmen, with their holds full of ingots and pieces-of-eight and their rude brown cabins embellished by lovely female captives. Yet I cannot help thinking that the notion that all romance has gone out of the sea comes from taking our ideas from the marine novelists. We find nothing happening nowadays that corresponds with the story-books, and so we imagine that maritime romance is dead. It is perfectly true that certain picturesque features have vanished, and that our current annals may lack something of the old sentimental and heroical qualities; but if, as I take it, the true

romance of the deep lies in the obscure story of the sailorman as he is to be found on the merchantman's quarter-deck or forecastle, and not at all in those shiver-my-timber-like absurdities which have so long and so impudently usurped Jack's place in the appreciation of the public of this sea-girt country, then it seems to me scarcely a day passes but that, in the brief column in small type headed "Shipping Intelligence," more thrilling and living and moving matters may be read in five minutes than will be found in all the sea stories that were ever written. The thing is at least worth testing. By my side is a copy of a well-known shipping paper, filled with reports, shipmasters' depositions, and the like. It is true that these reports, etc., are variously dated, but they are comprised in one journal, and are offered as one day's maritime news. I will cull a few specimens taking care that each sample shall illustrate one of those scores of perils which are part and parcel of the sailor's life, and which constitute the real romance of the sea.

In lat. 35° 50' S., long. 25° 45' E., a vessel named the *Cardiganshire*, commanded by Captain M'Kechnie, met with a heavy gale of wind that obliged her to heave to. The sea was blown up into smoke that shrouded the horizon, and brought the water-line to within a mile of the labouring and storm-beaten ship. But suddenly, in the middle of a flaw that opened the sea down in the north-east quarter, the people of the *Cardiganshire* spied a vessel with distress signals flying, pitching and rolling furiously, and apparently in dire peril. Nothing could be done in such a storm as was then raving; but, the thick atmosphere clearing as the afternoon wore away, the crew of the *Cardiganshire* watched that struggling vessel, that was sometimes shrouded with spray, sometimes beaten on to her beam-

ends by coils of the mighty Pacific surges sweeping over her hull, until the darkness rolled down and nothing could be seen of her. The gale broke in the middle watch, and by dawn the weather had greatly moderated. When the sun rose every eye aboard the *Cardiganshire* was directed towards the quarter where the wrecked and mutilated vessel was last seen, and, to the joy of all hands, she was found to be still afloat, but so deep in the water that little more than her bulwarks were visible, and rolling upon the heavy swell left by the gale with the deadly, sickly motion of a vessel that seems to linger a few minutes before making her final plunge. The *Cardiganshire* at once ran down and hove to abreast of her. There was a crowd of men standing upon the deckhouse aft, and amongst them a woman and a child. Boats were manned, and with great difficulty the unfortunate people were taken off the wreck and brought aboard the *Cardiganshire*. Their story was brief and grim, as all such tales are. Their vessel was called the *Davina*, and she was bound from Sourabaya to the English Channel with sugar. Two days before the *Cardiganshire* sighted her a tempest had burst upon and dismantled her. The very first outfly rendered her people helpless; but worse followed, for on the evening of the same day a sea came aboard that washed the master, mate, and three of the hands away. The name of the drowned captain was Scott, and the woman and infant who had been rescued were his wife and child.

There are the seeds, surely, of a thrilling romance in this little narrative for any painter of marine life who knows the heart of the sailor, who can put into words the anguish of his soul at a time like this, and who can give shape to the hopes and fears, the bitterness of protracted expectation, the hunger and thirst, the



paralysing sensation of the drowning vessel's struggle with the pitiless seas, which torture him often into raving madness.

Or let me take from the same column, and a few paragraphs lower down, another brief romance, told in the dry log-book fashion which means so little to lands men, so much to the sailor who sees all the suffering and the horror that lie behind these hard, concise relations. This report comes in a letter from Melbourne. A sailing ship, named the *Trevelyan*, was passing the island of Tristan d'Acunha—a dismal and melancholy rock lying in the heart of the vast solitude of waters where the South Atlantic meets the giant Pacific, and pretty nearly at an equal distance from the coasts of South America and of South Africa,—when, as the vessel drew abreast of this island, her crew were astonished to see two boats put off containing seven men and a woman. The main topsail yard was backed, and the arrival of the boats awaited with the utmost eagerness and interest. On their approach one of the occupants hailed in good English, and begged, in the most earnest manner, to be taken off the island. When asked who they were, they replied that they belonged to a schooner named the *Edward Vittery*, of Brixham, that had been wrecked on that island two months before. The master's name was Peter Yorke, the woman was his wife, and the six men were the crew. "As I considered it my duty," said Captain A. F. Roberts, who commanded the *Trevelyan*, "I took them and landed them here (Melbourne)." Dryly written, but quite to the point. What a narrative of suffering, of adventure, of bitter and apparently hopeless imprisonment on that far-off distant rock is contained in this brief report! Two months on that dismal, remote island! All sorts of questions arise in the face of such an ocean tale. How

did they live? Who were their companions? What shelter did they find or make? How did the woman manage for clothes? What were their feelings, as day after day, as week after week, went past, and nothing but the glimpse of some far-off sail rewarded their cruel vigils?

The next paragraph is tragical only in suggestion. A Norwegian vessel sighted a barque with her lower topsails set, some of her canvas in rags, her yards braced "anyhow," as Jack says. On approaching her, she was seen to be abandoned. It was a fine day, and some of the Norwegian's people went aboard, and, on overhauling the stranger's papers, found her to be the barque *Cito*, bound from Wilmington for Hamburg. The shrewd Norwegian skipper, seeing something to be got here, left four men aboard the derelict, with orders to carry her to port. The last that was heard of the *Cito* came from a vessel named the *Hjelman*, that arrived at Falmouth, and reported that in lat.  $43^{\circ} 46' N.$ , long.  $40^{\circ} 8' W.$ , she passed the barque, one of whose men called out to the *Hjelman's* people that the *Cito* was making six inches of water per hour. By looking at a map you will see that the *Cito*, when last heard of, would be very nearly in the heart of the North Atlantic. Four seamen, to work even a small barque, do not make a numerous crew. They would require to stand watches. Two would remain on deck for four hours, and then the other two would come up and keep watch for four hours. Of the men on deck one would be at the wheel, leaving one to look out for the weather and attend to the yards and sails. I do not know whether that barque ever reached port; but I think I see her struggling slowly and in broken trim across the great Atlantic, with her pumps clanking and gushing often, and her little company of men sounding

the well, and looking over the side, and wondering, if a gale of wind should tackle them, how they were going to deal with it.

Hard upon a possible comes an actual tragedy. A schooner, named the *Eustace*, commanded by Captain Hornsby, was proceeding on her voyage from San Francisco to Mazatlan. One day—the date of which is not given—the cook fell upon the captain and stabbed him to death. The crew seized the murderer and imprisoned him in the cabin, but he had not been locked up long when smoke was noticed coming up through the skylight, and shortly afterwards it was discovered that the miscreant had set fire to the vessel. This most tragical fragment of marine romance is narrated in six brief lines. Two points are made prominent—first, the mate and four of the men were saved and landed at Mazatlan; and, secondly, that the cargo on board the schooner was worth seventy thousand dollars. But one wants to know did these five men compose the crew, or were there others, and did they perish? and the cook? was he released from the flaming cabin, or left there to be roasted alive? Maybe these reports would be less thrilling if they were fuller. They are meant for sailors, who can mostly guess all that is left untold. But what a startling romantic tragedy is here! Could the novelist invent a wilder and more thrilling picture than the murder of the captain, the rush of the men upon the murderer, his being flung below and locked up there; and then the flames bursting forth and driving those five men overboard into their boat?

Some of the incidents related in these reports are suggestive to sailors to a degree beyond anything landsmen can imagine. Take, for instance, such an extract as that quoted from the log-book of the barque *Hermes*,

bound from Pensacola to Grimsby. In the very middle of the North Atlantic, at two o'clock in the afternoon, she passed a vessel, on whose headboard was written the name *Flora P. Stafford*. She was abandoned, and apparently in ballast. Her port side was under water, she had her lower topsails set, but her courses were hauled up, her jibboom was in halves, and her stem at the water's edge very much damaged. The extract ends with "Fresh breeze and heavy sea prevented us boarding her." The real significance of the report lies in those closing words. A sailor immediately falls to wondering whether there was any one aboard of her. Such an idea would hardly present itself to a landsman, who would see in this extract nothing but a description of one of the scores of derelicts which ships are constantly reporting. The imagination may easily conceive of famine-stricken men lying motionless and helpless under the bulwarks, or upon the floor of the deck-house, dying for the want of a mouthful of food and water, which that fresh breeze and that heavy sea prevented them from getting. Nor in conceptions of this kind is there anything of fancifulness. Over and over again shipwrecked men, saved when *in extremis*, tell how ship after ship went by their beaten and broken hull because they had no means of acquainting them with their distress, or because famine and anguish of soul had so prostrated them that they were unable to lift a hand to motion for help.

In the same way, there is a most pitiful eloquence in some of those two and three line paragraphs which are published in the shipping news, and of which I have marked no less than seven in that single sheet from which I have made the above quotations; paragraphs, I mean, such as this one, that tells that the *Mette Margrethe*, Norwegian barque, bound from London for

Chatham, N.B., struck on St. Paul's during a thick fog and gale, and immediately went to pieces, drowning the master, mate, three men, and a boy; or such as this, that in three lines relates that a Plymouth pilot cutter, after having put a pilot on board the steamship *Blenheim*, capsized off Penlee Point, "drowning pilots;" or such as this, of six lines, in which, in parenthesis, so to speak, it is told that a man named William Davies, a seaman, belonging to Nevin, was knocked overboard from the mainboom by the ship rolling, and was drowned. These, to be sure, are the minute incidents of the sea; but it is these things which make up the romance of it, the life of it, the fascination and the terror of it. There are briefer references even than these, too, which strike me as extraordinarily pregnant and full of meaning, epitomizing in a single sentence adventures and perils and romances which, if fully told, would fill many volumes. Here, for instance, I see that Captain Alexander, of the *L. and W. Armstrong*, reports that in lat. 23° N., long. 67° W., he passed half of a vessel, of British build, painted light green, almost level with the water. How might a sailor theorize upon that fragment, as it slowly veered astern, tossing like a human limb upon the waters, and washed by the green seas which broke into bright foam as they went seething and hissing over the mutilated relic! Just as the scientist might build you up the whole structure of some primæval quadruped from a single bone, so from such a fragment as that "half of a vessel of British build" would a sailor construct a direful story of struggling and suffering and death. The deepest human interest attaches to such an object. Be sure that broken hull has been the theatre of misery that will never find a voice in this world. And indeed here it seems to me is the chief pathos of such objects—they

are the mute memorials of things which, for the most part, can only be guessed at. Where are the actors? What were their sufferings? Were there women and little children among them? Such questions crowd thickly into the mind along with the sight of a floating wreck like that. Every creature may have perished for all you know, and scores of bodies may be floating in the deep blue over which your vessel is dancing. Or at this moment they may be crowded in their boats, slowly perishing, haggardly scanning the sea for the help that never comes. Equally moving, too, I venture to think, are those short reports of empty boats met at sea, such, for instance, as this from Perthleven, which says that a ship's boat, name on stern *Leontine Amelie*, of Vannes, with white bottom, black top, and green-and-white inside, has been picked up in the bay, and towed in here. Nothing so arouses conjecture as an empty boat washing about at sea. It is like coming across a horse, saddled and bridled, but riderless, and standing idly with heaving sides. An empty boat is almost a sure sign of a disaster having happened, and it is impossible to encounter one without the imagination furnishing it with a terrible significance.

But even in the old forms the sea preserves its romance. I said just now that there were no pirates, but in a corner of my shipping paper I meet with as dramatic a yarn of piracy as any man could wish to read. It is true that the picaroons are Chinamen, but marine romance flourishes as well on pigtails as on fierce whiskers, and a yellow buccaneer should be quite as exciting as those black West Indian scoundrels who used to make Jack walk the plank a hundred years ago. The genius of Michael Scott would have revelled in the story of the German barque *Ccident*. She left Hong Kong

in the morning, and in the afternoon, being then about two miles south of the Nine Pins, the skipper spied a couple of junks to windward apparently making the same course as the barque. It was presently noticed, however, that they were gradually edging down, and by-and-by one of them drew so near the *Occident* as to oblige her to shift her helm. Her people bawled to the Chinaman to get out of the road, but the answer was that the wind prevented him from doing so. Whilst the first junk was bothering the barque in this way, the second junk came sheering alongside, and then, all on a sudden, a whole volley of stinkpots and firecrackers was discharged from the Chinamen, and at the same time thirty or forty of the pirates tumbled aboard, and charged the *Occident's* crew, which consisted of three Europeans and seven Chinese sailors. The captain having been wounded, was driven into the bows of the vessel, and a guard set over him. The mate was next seized and pinioned, and placed alongside the skipper; after which the pirates set to work to rob the barque. They took whatever they could lay their hands on, down to the vessel's lanterns and some spare rolls of canvas. Believing there was more to be had yet, they dragged the skipper aft, and threatened to kill him if he did not show them where the money on board was. The poor fellow protested that they had taken all that there was; on which they let him go, tumbled overboard into their own vessels, and triumphantly sailed away. "The attack," says the report in conclusion, "is significant as a warning that no false sense of security should yet be allowed to arise in the minds of those who trade in these waters simply because there have not been many piracies to record of late." In other words, the sea has not lost the old traditions, and even piracy is not yet defunct. But

on this head the business of the *Ferret* is conclusive enough. Running away with a vessel is an act of piracy, and the identification of that steamer at Melbourne cuts short one of the wildest incidents of romance to be found in all maritime story. In the face of all this, then, and of much more for which I have no room, it is not quite reasonable to believe that the sea is altogether the dull affair—the water and the sky, the calms and waves, which steam is declared to have made it. Taking that one day's maritime news as typical of what is happening every hour throughout the year, it seems to me that there never was a time when the ocean was so cramfull of interest as now, when its claims upon the attention of landsmen were so forceful and fascinating. It is all very well to say that Jack is no longer the fine sailor he was ; but if there be any truth in our marine reports, Jack not only nowadays goes through as much hard work as the mariner of former times did, but he goes farther afield, sees more and suffers more ; and though some of the picturesque perils of earlier days may be absent, their place is filled by dangers of a more inexorable kind, as witness some of the maritime casualties of the last ten years, the like of which cannot be met with in the days when wooden hulls and whole topsails swept the seas.



## *SEA-TERMS ASHORE.*

SAILORS have borrowed many terms for their ships from the shore. They have decorated them after the manner of sweethearts ; for who does not know that when a vessel goes to sea she proceeds on her voyage embellished with chains, jewel-blocks, garnets, bangles, breasthooks, pins, ribands, gauntlets, heels, harpins (which must mean hair-pins), garlands, hoods, collars, and a score of other nick-nacks and decorations, all of such a kind as an honourable Jack Tar would bestow upon the lady of his affections ? But, on the other hand, the landsman owes some very choice and pregnant sentences to the sea. Many a saying wonderfully full of meaning would have no existence but for Jack's fruitful mind. It is not very strange that our common speech should comprise numerous nautical references. We are a great maritime nation ; we are the greatest in the world, and have been so since we thrashed the Dutch ; sailors are found everywhere, and the words they bring with them from the ocean are picked up and employed as exceedingly suggestive, and so find their way about until they become a part of the colloquial tongue, though many people who use them only know what they mean so far as their shore-sense goes ; they do not understand their sea significance. Besides, it is a pleasure to borrow the

speech of sailors. Jack is a man much beloved for his virtues and qualities. He makes, indeed, an incomparably nice man, whether young or old, for a tea party. He is large-hearted and generous. If he has money he does not sordidly keep it hidden in his pockets, but holds it boldly in his hand that it may be readily distributed. All the ladies love sailors. They know that there is no man who has a deeper admiration for them than Jack. He believes them to be the angels he used to be told about when a boy, and he eyes them with awe, blushes and stammers in their presence, and would fight the tallest landsman for daring to doubt that a woman can be anything but beautiful and pure and good. Of course, the sailors I am talking about are not the dreadful creatures who jump half-clothed on to the decks of deep steamers from piers and wharves; to such men and their like the English language could owe nothing but bad expressions and words not to be heard in polite society. The salts I mean, from whose vocabulary we have enriched our daily speech, are proper sailors, who own that a ship's forecastle is not a college for learning, but amongst whom, nevertheless, there circulate hundreds of sayings, all of them indicating shrewd and often profound knowledge of human nature, both maritime and shoregoing.

I have amused myself by thinking over a few nautical expressions in common use amongst us on shore, and I have been struck by the dexterity of their adoption. One should say that originally it must have been sailors themselves who grafted these words and sayings upon our speech, for landsmen could not possibly master their significance with accuracy enough to apply them with that clearness and niceness of exposition which they furnish. Take the word "mainstay"

Nothing is commoner than to hear such an expression as "Oh, he is the mainstay of the family." Here you have a strictly nautical image. Sailors might, indeed, hold that a ship's forestay is more important than her mainstay, because the loss of a mainmast is of less consequence than the loss of a foremast. But then the mainmast is the principal mast of a ship, and the mainstay may count among the first of the important pieces of rigging of a ship, since it supports the mast forward; and no term, therefore, could well be more expressive than that of mainstay as applied to any one maintaining others or to anything acting as a prop. "Spliced" will be more generally understood. A couple are said to be spliced when they are married. But one should know what a splice is to appreciate the application of the nautical term—how it means the bringing together of two ends of ropes with the strands open, and the passing of these strands through one another until a union is formed so strong that a strain brought upon the line would break it in any other place than the splice. This signifies marriage as it should be, according to Jack, and the word in this sense is common ashore.

What could be fuller of meaning than to speak of a man floored by a commercial difficulty as on his "beam-ends"? When a ship is on her beam-ends she is in a very ugly position indeed, and the next few minutes may see her founder. Many a man is thus situated by a financial tempest, that heaves him down till it seems impossible that he can escape from sinking and disappearing in the deep of insolvency. There is the term "hard up." I claim this as nautical for the following reason: in most cases when a ship's helm is put hard up there is some danger in the road or about. It may be a heavy squall that compels her to keep away; or it

may be a vessel ahead, or broken water. Anyhow, it is fair to infer that she is in a situation of difficulty, and so, no doubt, is a man who is "hard up."

"Taken aback" is also in common use. How many ladies, I wonder, who have said, "I was really quite taken aback, my dear," imagined that they were comparing themselves to a ship whose way had been stopped by the wind chopping round, and blowing directly against the sails so as to press them against the masts? Of the paternity of the expression, "I will put a spoke into that fellow's wheel," I am in doubt. Every wheel has spokes, but a ship's wheel has them in the most emphatic sense. Whether an extra spoke in a man's carriage wheel would annoy him, except, perhaps, for its disharmonizing the appearance of the wheel, I cannot say; but there can be no doubt that a spoke more than a ship's wheel wanted would bother a helmsman when his hand came to it as a thing in his way. Neither am I sure as to the origin of the term "three sheets in the wind." It sounds nautical, but it will not stand examination, for it is absurd to talk of a sheet, which is a rope, as being in the wind. The term, I am afraid, savours of the land, and might have emanated from some genius who took the word sheet to mean sail. But other words borrowed for shore-use from the sea, and indicating drunkenness, are salt enough. Such is the term "slewed." "Slew" means to turn; and, therefore, to speak of a man as slewed is to signify that he is "turned round," twisted the wrong way by drink. Two other nautical expressions seem to have obtained a firm hold ashore; these are to "turn out" and "turn in" for getting out of bed and going to bed. "He can spin a twister," is a common phrase, and signifies, as I take it, that the person of whom it is said can tell a long story that is not quite a lie,

though full of exaggerations. The origin of this, I conceive, must be looked for at sea. On all ships there is a little machine called a spun-yarn winch, with which sailors manufacture a kind of small stuff, termed spun-yarn. The winch is revolved by a handle, and twists up the yarns, which are stretched along at great length—as far, for instance, as from the topgallant forecastle to the break of the poop. Hence, as I think, comes the phrase, “To spin a twister.”

“No staying power” is another good nautical figure. A vessel is said not to stay when she refuses to come round into the wind, so as to be put upon the other tack. A man without staying power is in this acceptation a man who will not go ahead. “Tacking” in various meanings is largely employed ashore. One frequently hears a person speak of “beating about for an idea.” Nautically speaking, “to beat” is to force your ship in the direction from which the wind is blowing by sailing at angles, first on one tack, then on the other. Thus, “to beat about for an idea” is to incline the mind first here, and then there, in order to come at the fancy or thought one wants. Again, one often hears the expression “Oh, he’s trying the other tack now.” Here we are as nautical as we can well be. Equally maritime is the expression “He is sailing very close to the wind.” This is sometimes said of a man who acts with great want of caution, and who is jeopardizing his position and even his liberty by his stupid audacity; but its meaning is best interpreted when it is applied to a man who becomes a niggard, who, having a pleasant breeze which he could make the most of if he liked by keeping his sails full, chooses to hug it. “To sound a man” must also be nautical. Where should we have found the term if there had been no lead and line,

and no need to measure in fathoms the depth of the water under a ship's keel? When a lawyer speaks of "a hitch in the arrangement" he might hardly be suspected of guessing that that useful word comes from the sea. A hitch is a knot or it is a turn in a rope that checks it from travelling or running out; there are several hitches, such as half-hitch, clove-hitch, timber-hitch, and the like, all used for various purposes; and a hitch in an agreement just does for it what the sailor's hitch will do for a rope. "To take the wind out of his sails" is a very salt term much used ashore. At sea it is done by one ship passing another to windward. Ashore landmen have their own methods. When a man says, "He ought to be above board," he is also talking in sailor fashion. Board here, I take it, refers to deck; and to be above board means to be in the open air, out of the cabin, out of hiding, in a place on which the sun shines, and where everybody can see you. Then there is "plain sailing"—"after that difficulty was adjusted, it was all plain sailing." It is a landsman's idea of sailing without any trouble, the way clear, and nothing needing attention but the helm.

"Under false colours" explains itself as a familiar phrase. This would be said, for instance, of a Spanish ship that hoisted the Danish ensign to make passing vessels believe her a Dane. "He showed himself in his true colours at last" completes the first image. Then there is the word "course." "What course will he adopt?" "Is that the right course?" surely signifies that the sea and ships were in the mind of those who made the term current ashore. The course of a ship is the direction the wind allows her to sail in; her true course the line that would carry her direct to the place she is bound to. Hence the irresolution implied in a

man by the question, "What course will he take?" seems to me to give to the term an ocean origin. *Fall foul* has come ashore, and is apparently much appreciated. "They are constantly falling foul of each other," constantly quarrelling, in fact. Ships foul each other by dragging their anchors and in other ways; and any one who has witnessed the riotous scene that usually follows these accidents, both on deck amongst the crews and aloft among the spars, will value the pregnancy of the shore-going application of the phrase.

Then there is "Looking up." "Things are looking up," says the grocer or butcher hopefully. He has gone to sea for the remark without knowing it; for "looking up" is what is said of a ship when close-hauled and points off her course, but gradually stealing round to it through the veering or backing of the wind. "I find a great falling off," says a man. Here again is Jack's inspiration. A ship "falls off" when the wind draws ahead, and it is some adverse moral breeze that causes the falling off of those of whom the complaint is made ashore. "Over-reach"—is this of nautical origin? A ship when she goes about and stretches along, say on the port tack, is "reaching," or "ratching," as sailors call it. If she holds on too long may not she be said to "over-reach," herself? Be this as it may, the term "whip it out," "speak it quickly," is unquestionably nautical. Many people might suppose that this meant "Thrash it out of yourself;" but the fact is, a whip at sea is a rope rove through a block, and often used for hoisting things up on deck from alongside. Therefore, to whip it up or out is to hoist it out, and this is what landsmen mean, though they may not know it. Then there is the term "come to." "She fainted, and it was long before I could get her to come to." A ship comes to when, after

being off the wind, her helm is put down, and she is brought to her course, or as near to it as the wind permits. Thus a woman is very much off the wind in a swoon, but she comes to her course again, comes to her senses and to her proper life, when she revives. A man with a weak intellect is "cranky." A cranky ship is a ship that leans easily and perilously under a small weight of wind from the want of stability. She is "cranky" as a half-witted person is, and the term comes from her. "He's got no ballast in him" means a tendency to capsize and founder when said of a man, and the image is completely nautical. I am surprised to find the word "canted" coming into use. I heard a lady the other day tell a milliner that her hat was not sufficiently canted on the left side. To "cant" at sea means to turn, to lift up, to tilt, as to cant the head of a ship off, to cant a cask by lifting one end of it, and so on. "To brace up," again, is a common expression. "To brace one's nerves up." This must be referred to bracing up the yards of a ship, for which no doubt she is always the better if the wind doesn't draw too far ahead. One speaks of a woman as being "in good trim," said of her attire, and of a man speaking of him physically. A ship is in good trim when her cargo is so stowed that she sits on the water, perfectly, as she should. Scores of other terms have been introduced into our common every-day speech from the sailor's vocabulary, such as "drifting," "making headway," "making leeway," "holding his own," "shot in the locker," "how the land lies," "pull together," "rakish," "go ahead," "lurch," "Where are you bound to?" "a man's sheet-anchor," "Look out for squalls," "rigged out," "cruising about," "the coast is clear," and dozens more; but my memory cannot immediately extend the list, nor, perhaps, are further examples necessary.



That landsmen should find so much expressiveness in terms of which they have no notion of the etymology, nor of the objects and manœuvres they indicate to a sailor curiously illustrates the almost human vitality that is to be found in ships, and their capacity by their own behaviour on the ocean, and by what they are made to do, of furnishing commentaries which pass into proverbs and sayings upon human nature, its vices, virtues, and weaknesses.

## *JACK'S BAIRNS.*

ANY one who has inspected the home for old merchant seamen at Belvedere and the asylum for merchant seamen's orphans at Snaresbrook may claim to have seen two extremes of the nautical life. In the grounds of the first institution \* you view the hobbling figures of men eighty and ninety years old, leaning on sticks, or seated, bowed and talking aloud to themselves under trees; in the playgrounds of the other home you behold boys of from seven to fourteen years old racing round and round, making the air merry with their cries, and positively fatiguing the eye with the ceaseless activity of their legs and arms. The costume of these lads is not unlike that worn by the old men at Belvedere—dark blue cloth jackets and trousers; so that on passing from the beautiful grounds of the one home into the pleasant lawns and gardens of the other, it would need no great effort of imagination to conceive that some harlequin-wand had been waved over the ancient seamen and transformed them, dressed as they are, into a mob of capering boys.

I stood on a terrace, overlooking one of the playgrounds, a long while, watching the little fellows. A break in the school hours had come; they had pitched

\* A description of which appears in the companion volume to this collection, "Round the Galley Fire."

their grammars and geographies into the desks, and rushed out headlong—one hundred and fifty-six of them; and in variety of movement, oddness of posture, dexterity of limbs, and capacity of jumping and running there never yet was a pantomime company that could have beaten them.

“Every one you see,” said the secretary, who stood at my side, “represents a dead seaman.”

“And motherless?”

“Some, but the mothers of most of them are living.”

“I dare say,” said I, looking down at the boys, “that many of those children were in their fathers’ last thoughts when dying. Who can tell how the struggles of the drowning seamen have been heightened into an agony bitterer than a hundred deaths by thoughts of the little children he leaves, who, perhaps, may never hear how he died, but who will too surely know that they are fatherless by the hunger and cold that follow in the wake of every poor man’s death? You have girls as well here?”

“Ninety-six, in another part of the home devoted to them. Shall we walk through the building?”

We quitted the terrace, or balcony, and re-entered the house. Of all the charitable institutions that ever I had the privilege to inspect, I can recall none more perfect in its general design and appointments than this asylum. It is situated at Snaresbrook; the fringe of the forest of Epping enriches its grounds with trees; in the north the dense green foliage of the forest itself stands against the sky, and between are the crowded structures of Woodford; westward stands Walthamstow, where the scattered trees gather and thicken and embower the land as they trend towards High Beech; whilst in the south you may see over the foliage that conceals the bed of the river the lofty spars of ships passing up or

down. The building covers an acre of ground, and is made imposing by the juxtaposition of a very handsome chapel presented to the charity by Lady Morrison, the wife of a former master of the Mint. It was truly a noble gift, and a magnificent memorial of a woman's fidelity to the cause of the sailor, whom women have always been quickest and foremost in honouring and helping for love of his plain, honest heart, and for compassion of his hard and perilous life. The hospitable and obliging secretary was determined that I should see everything; and, as he found me very willing, I believe there is not a cupboard in the immense building into which we did not push our noses.

We began with the basement, where I found myself in several long corridors, resting on arches, with glimpses to be obtained here and there of the green country outside; and then, having inspected a spacious plunge bath, a large playground for the girls, a great room for the same little creatures to play in in cold or damp weather, a very fine kitchen, and store-rooms full of loaves of bread and joints of meat, we went upstairs to view the dormitories. One may gather a notion of the size of these rooms when I say that in one of them—in the boys' part—I counted forty-six beds, in three rows, with plenty of space between each of them. They were all draped with white coverlets, were liberally furnished with blankets, were soft to lie upon, and each made a little nest in which any mother might feel contented to know her child was sleeping. The one characteristic of this home that pleased me most was the total absence of all charitable suggestions. There was nothing parochial about it—no hint of vestryism, that distressing feature of British virtue. If it were an hotel or a high-class boarding-house the little inmates' comfort could not be

more anxiously consulted. For instance, in the girls' sleeping-rooms there was an apartment fitted up as a lavatory, and furnished with a couple of baths. No cold corridor, therefore, for the little feet to cross. These are the signs one looks for and loves to find in charitable institutions, especially in those where children are cared for. One would not have an able-bodied adult pauper made too comfortable, but a little child cannot help its poverty, and if charity is to be extended to it, let it be done with appreciation not only of its helplessness, but its tenderness, its fragility, and with a wise disregard of foolish Bumble-like theories which torture the child that it may be fit to meet privation and misery hereafter.

The Home is so large that the going up and down stairs and the passing from one room to another occupied a considerable time. The sick wards are a good illustration of the care that is bestowed upon these orphans; the walls of the rooms are of parian cement, and the floors like a ship's deck, with scupper-holes in the corners for the water to run away by, so that the wards may, when the necessity arises, be washed down by the copious play of a hose from top to bottom. Just outside one of the wards is a shaft connected with the dust-bin, and whatever has to be removed from the sick rooms is thrown down the shaft and disinfected before it is carted away. All the apartments throughout are of great elevation and well lighted, but undoubtedly the finest room is the dining-hall, a truly regal chamber, as big as a theatre, with an organ near the door, and rows of tables running down it, and a desk on one side where prayers are read morning and evening. To pass from this handsome chamber to the chapel is an easy and proper transition. As I stood on the rich piece of pavement near the communion-rail and looked towards the

door, having the whole array of seats before me, I thought it must be a touching sight to witness those benches filled on the one side with the little orphan boys, and on the other with the girls, and see their faces all gazing one way. It is not only that here is gathered together, Sabbath after Sabbath, a congregation wholly composed of little orphans; they are the children of English sailors—of men who have died with the roar of the sea in their ears, or in hospital in distant countries, stricken down in the noontide of their life to languish and expire among strangers. What is it that makes the sailor's orphan so appealing? I stood picturing that congregation of little children until the imagination grew into a kind of reality. I heard the childish voices blending in praise; I saw the little fatherless forms kneeling in the worship of Him who had raised up friends for them; I beheld the scores of tiny faces, and thought of each as already alone in this great world, dependent for bread and shelter upon the bounty of those whose hearts are with the sailor and his bairns.

I had seen the chapel, and the dining-room, and dormitories, the baths, the laundry, the doctor's room, stored with bottles like a chemist's shop, and had admired the magnificent view from the summit of the tower that crowns the handsome edifice; but as yet I had not been introduced to the little boys and girls, not even beheld these latter, though I had heard the sound of their laughter and calls as we passed near the playground in which they were romping.

"They are now at school again," said the secretary. "They'll be out by-and-by, and then you shall see them at tea. Meanwhile we will inspect them at their studies."

He led the way, I followed, and throwing open a

door—the place is so big that I scarcely preserve the geography of it—he ushered me into a large room full of little boys seated at desks, with two or three masters among them. They all stood up as we entered, and this enabled me to note how very little most of them were.

“How many have you here?” I asked.

“About one hundred,” he replied.

Dressed in blue cloth, with rows of brass buttons, clean, well tended, with the colour from their recent sports still mantling in their cheeks, they looked as brave, bright, and happy a little community as the most critical eye could desire to see.

“Were their fathers of all grades?” I asked.

“Of all grades,” answered the secretary—“captains, mates, carpenters, stewards, able seamen. Not the least difference is made; and what, perhaps, may strike you as singular is that it is utterly impossible to guess the paternity of the boys from their appearance. You might fancy that there would be a something in a captain’s boy, for example, that would prove him as being better born, so to say, than a steward’s, or what is called a common sailor’s, but it is not so.”

He turned to the little fellows, and, addressing one of them, said, “What was your father, my lad?”

“A carpenter, sir.”

“And yours?”

“A captain.”

“And yours?”

“A mate, sir.”

And so on of half a dozen more. Clearly a sailor’s son is quite independent of his father’s rating. One little fellow, who was an able seaman’s bairn, might have passed very well for a young prince, with his fine eyes and handsome well-bred features.

"What is the age of the youngest here?" I asked.

"Seven," answered the secretary; "they are not admitted under that age. What boys here are seven years old?" he called out.

Half a dozen arms were held up; such tiny little fellows, some of them, all looking anxiously, as though a question of cake or toffee were involved. I took note of a kind of bustle at one desk, and saw several boys trying to make a little creature understand that he was seven, and must hold his hand up. He did so after a while, but with an air of doubt, as if he could not satisfy his own mind.

"And what boys here are fourteen?" called out the secretary

Instantly some twenty or thirty arms were jerked up. I could scarcely credit that one of them was of that age; he looked no taller than a man's hat, and his head reached to his neighbour's elbow. However, he kept up his hand with such perseverance as satisfied me, after observing him narrowly, that he could not be mistaken. I looked at some of the maps drawn by these boys, their dictation papers, and the like, and was much struck by the intelligence, care, and progress they showed. There were two other large rooms, adjacent to this, also full of boys at their studies. Whilst I listened to what one of the masters was telling them, and watching with unceasing interest the various expressions on the rows of little faces, the secretary fetched a big book, like a ledger, and placed it open before me.

"When boys and girls are admitted here," said he, "they are made to write and cipher in this book, just to let us know how much knowledge they bring with them. There are two of these books—one for the boys and the other for the girls. This is the boys'."

I took a page at random, and read, as a sample of



one boy's spelling—the writing is indescribable—the following, which had evidently been dictated to him:—  
“A mobel lion who was faint ly down to sleep and reffress hisself——” Here the little fellow had given up, after apparently a long and severe struggle with a blot. Another entry, as a “sample,” was this: “the sreep is one of the most useful creathur wich god has guven to man you may see them in the fealds——” Here nature had given out again, and the boy had broken down. A third entry was: “alfred webber Silly ilens how doth the little buesyes be hin proff each shing hour how skilfullhe she bilds her self how neet she spreads the wax and labers hard to stor.” But the real wonder of this book was the contrast in the handwriting, for the lad that makes the entry when he arrives has to make a similar entry on the opposite page when he leaves the Home, and nothing could more forcibly illustrate the merits of the educational system pursued in this asylum than the rude, blotted, ill-spelt scrawl on the left page and the copperplate-like writing by the same hand on the page facing. We passed from the boys' to the girls' schoolroom. The boys are a touching sight—I mean the feeling that they are all orphans makes them so; but the little girls somehow seem to strike deeper into one's heart. There were some eighty or ninety of them, fair and dark; many but mere babies to the eye, others tall, with already something of maidenliness in their figures. They all stood up, but were told to sit down again, whilst the secretary called to know how many among them were seven years old, whereupon a number of the little things stood up. No one could have looked at them unmoved. They seemed so very young to be without a mother's love and care. I bent over a golden-haired child and asked her what her father had been.

"A captain," she murmured in a whisper, looking with a kind of tearful wistfulness in her shining eyes.

I cannot conceive of a nobler charity, of an asylum more hospitable, of treatment more gentle, of care more unremitting. This must always be the main thing where children are concerned. They are helpless, they are easily cowed and broken-down in heart and spirit; they have not the sense, or at least the power, of making their feelings known; therefore, are they kindly treated? for, if not, the charity that deals with them is a sham and an iniquity, an outrage that cannot be too quickly abolished. A hundredfold more hospitable are the railway arches and the blind alleys of a city for destitute children than the school, asylum, and institution whose discipline is that of a prison, and whose existence is practically nothing more than an excuse to furnish the Squeerses and Bumbles of this latter-day life with salary, board, and lodging at the expense of a public who asks no questions.

It was five o'clock. I was anxious to return, but the secretary begged me to wait for the next train that I might see the children at their tea or supper, as the meal is called. So we went into the big dining-hall, where I found all the tables prettily set out with clean white cloths, white china bowls, plates heaped up with bread and butter—not bread and scrape, but good rich butter—with a kind of urn, like a gigantic coffee-pot, at the head of every table. Presently I heard the tramp of innumerable little feet; a schoolmistress entered and went quietly to the organ, and immediately after the whole of the children—a very army of them—marched in, the boys leading, and separating in companies, with amazing precision, and filling the tables. The uniform of the little creatures, the soft rippling of the small

figures as they broke away in detachments, the gentle, lovable innocence in the rows of bright, honest little faces, made the picture a charming one. Presently they all stood up; the organ sounded, and a melodious grace was sung by over two hundred and fifty voices, which, being ended, the order was given to begin, and in a trice all was strict attention to business, the monitors filling the bowls with milk and water—as good as I am in the habit of paying fivepence a quart for neat—from the urns, and all hands hard at work on the bread and butter. It was a scene I am never likely to forget; and any one in search of an elevating emotion not to be found in politics, literature, art, or money, cannot do better than go down to Snaresbrook and see Jack's bairns there at their meals.

And now one word in conclusion. This asylum owes its existence wholly to voluntary contributions. Its patron is the Queen, and it speaks well for our great maritime industries that among those actively associated with it should be found such well-known names as Anderson, Devitt, Samuda, Currie, Wigram, and Hall. The building is capable of accommodating three hundred orphans; there is therefore room for thirty or forty more, but they cannot be received, because, said the secretary, "we are, as it is, at the end of our tether." Is there an English mother who, having the means, can refuse help to the asylum that shelters, educates, nourishes the dead sailor's child? Is there an Englishman who will deny assistance to an institution which, were the charity bestowed upon it commensurate with its grand and beautiful scheme, would lighten the dying hours of many an English sailor, whose last moments are now cruelly embittered by thoughts of the helpless little ones he will be leaving behind him? We have all

many claims upon us, and upon some the largest hearted must often reluctantly turn their backs ; but let not the dead sailor's starving infant be among those to whom we find ourselves obliged to say No. He appeals in the name of a calling we all honour, we all admire ; and I am sure that no tribute that the public could pay to the noble profession of the sea would be more deeply appreciated by those who follow it than help given to the Merchant Seamen's Orphan Asylum at Snaresbrook.

## AN OCEAN WAIF.

"I WAS second mate at the time," began Mr. Humphrey Roband, who related to me the following story, "and our vessel was a barque, named the *Eagle*. We were bound from Newport, in Monmouthshire, to Cape Town with a cargo of iron, and then we were to go on to Melbourne, and thence to Callao. Besides me, there were Captain Blackett, the master, and Mr. Josiah Bitting, the chief mate, along with fifteen or sixteen hands forward, including the idlers; and, taking us all round, I don't think that ever a better ship's company sailed out of an English port. There wasn't a foreigner among us; there was no growling, no loafing; everything was done quickly and with a will, and it was not only a pleasure to give an order, but a happiness to watch the execution of it.

"Well, we left Newport on a Monday afternoon, and went away down the Bristol Channel into the Atlantic Ocean, under all plain sail, in the finest of weathers. For near upon a fortnight there was nothing but brightness overhead and blue water under us, made feathery by the whipping of the breezes which blew, sometimes nor'-east and sometimes nor'-west, coming now and again a trifle fresh, but never so strong as to cause us once to furl the main royal day or night. We saw nothing of

the trade wind till we were in about latitude twenty degrees north; and then, after blowing us along for a spell, it failed us one morning with a slowly falling glass and a long ugly grey swell coming out of the sou'-west, and a sort of dirty blue sky filmed o'er with haze that might have passed for the drainings from smelters' chimnies. Amid this the sun hung like a huge jelly-fish, a shapeless oozing of brightness, with scarce enough of power in him to put a streak of light into the brow of the swell that swung heaving up tall out of the near horizon, with summits that seemed to be trying to wash the yellow stain he made out of the vault of the sky. There was a queer smell of decayed marine vegetable matter about, which came up in whiffs when the rolling of the barque made white water alongside; and, spite of the sky being thin enough to let the ghost of the sun show through, there was a look overhead that made you think that, if it was night, you'd see green lightning playing about over the mastheads, like the dartings of the phosphorus from the ship's side in black water when you're in the tropics and the night lies dead upon the breathless bosom of the ocean.

"Well, what these plain signs betokened came to pass right enough. The glass went on dropping, and the swell came along in a wilder and angrier roll, until at three o'clock that afternoon there was scarce more daylight visible than you'll find in the last lingerings of twilight ashore. We were snugged down to lower topsails, the yards square, for there was no call to brace them one way or another when for hours there hadn't been a breath of wind; no, sir, not so much as to give a flutter to the vane at the royal masthead, saving what the barque gave herself by the sweep of her spars. All hands were on deck, standing by, knowing that some-

thing was bound to happen, but incapable of guessing from what quarter it meant to come. It was as much as we could do to see one another's faces. The strain on the spars and rigging was something fearful with the rolling, and in the gloom overhead you could hear the creaking and complaining, the squealing of sheaves, the groaning of parrals and trusses. At four o'clock or thereabouts the wind swept down upon us in a body, right in the wake of the swell. It was wind at first, but it became a moving wall in a short time, and before the clewlines could be manned the foretopsail blew up and burst into smithereens, just like one of those elastic air balls when filled too full. It was a terrible tempest. I, who have seen some fearful weather in my time, will take my affidavit that a worse storm of wind never raged than that. It picked the sea up and made wheels of the waves that looked—I don't say they were—but that looked to be forty or fifty feet high.

"The *Eagle* was full of iron, very deep, and laboured heavily, taking in tons of water forward, so that the underdeck forecastle was scarcely to be come at by the men through the scuttle. In the troughs, during the weather rolls, the barque would lay so far over to windward that it was enough to make the oldest seaman hold his breath to look at the curl of the oncoming sea, and speculate whether it was possible that she could hoist herself out clear of that terrific white, roaring, flashing arch before it rolled its enormous volume clean over her. But the *Eagle* was a good sea-boat, having a flaring bow that forced the head surges to throw her up, and a swell of the sides that made her cork-like on the lean of a twenty-foot hill of water. Had she been of the ordinary tank-shape it must have been all froth to ten feet above the mastcoats, with the watch on deck in

the weather-rigging and the master and mates keeping a look-out in the cabin and conning her by the tell-tale.

“For three days we had terrible weather: then it broke; the wind veered to due east, and after blowing a double-reefed topsail breeze for twenty four hours, settled away into the north-east and blew along steady and bright again into the trade wind. It was a Wednesday, the morning watch, and I had charge of the deck. Daybreak found us under a foretopmast stun’ sail, the sky clear, and the east as green as moonlight with the dawn. The sea was calm, the trade clouds rolling in puffs of vapour athwart the stars overhead and in the west, and the horizon a line as black as you could produce by the sweep of a pen dipped in Indian ink. I stepped over to leeward to have a look at the sea under the foot of the mainsail, and just then the arch of the sun jutted up and sent a long beam of silver light flashing across the ocean, the extremity of which sparkled upon an object that appeared white and glistening in the radiance. It bore about three points on the lee bow. I fetched the glass, and took a look. She was a vessel, of what rig I could not distinguish, but apparently under small sail. I put down the glass and waited a bit, and then had another look. I now fancied I could detect signs of confusion aloft, but of this I could not yet be sure, though the small canvas she showed made her appearance singular considering the fine weather. Just then Captain Blackett came on deck, and I reported the sail to him. He pointed the telescope at her and said, ‘It seems a case of distress. Your sight’s better than mine; have you made out anything resembling a colour?’

“‘No, sir.’

“‘Well, we will bear down and see what’s the matter. Keep her away,’ he called out to the fellow at



the wheel; and at the same time I sung out to the watch to lay aft and brace the yards in a trifle.

"This was done, and the vessel brought about a point on our lee bow. It was not long before we were able to make her out very plainly with the glass. It was now seen that she was a small full-rigged ship, of about eight-hundred tons; her three lower topsails and topmast stay-sail had been blown away, and her wheel and all boats were gone. She had black bulwarks, and lay very deep, as though full of water. In the lower mizzen rigging the English ensign had been seized, union down, and there it blew, flickering like a flame, making as strong an appeal for assistance as ever a man could by waving his hands.

"Well, we shortened sail, and approached her, keeping a sharp look-out for anything that should resemble a human being; but there was nothing in that way to be seen. There was a longish deckhouse aft, and the remains of another one forward. There was not much swell on, and she lay pretty quiet, giving herself a slow slant now and again that hove a space of her wet side into the sun, and made her flash out like a flare.

"‘She looks to be abandoned, sir,’ says I to the captain.

"‘Why, yes; that’s her appearance, certainly,’ says he. ‘But it’s a fine morning; no harm can be done by your stepping aboard and giving her a brief overhaul.’

"So the barque’s maintopsail was laid to the mast, a boat lowered, and three hands pulled me aboard the wreck. Two men clambered over the rail after me, leaving one in charge of the boat. We stood a moment looking around. Her decks were full of raffle, ropes, staves of casks, and the like; the main hatch was open as if the crew had been jettisoning her cargo; her port bulwarks forward of the main rigging were smashed

flush with the deck; and altogether she had the most wrecked and strained appearance that ever I saw in a vessel afloat. I put my hand to my mouth and sang out, 'Anybody aboard here?' but the only answer that came was the sound of the streaming of the wind through the rigging, and the bubbling and washing noise of the water over the side.

"'No fear as to her not being abandoned, sir,' says one of the men. 'An empty coffin couldn't be more destitoot of life.'

"I stepped to the door of the deckhouse, and looked in. There was no appearance of injury here. A table went down it, with fixed chairs on one side and a locker on the other; and on the port side was a row of cabins—five or six, I think. The door of this deckhouse swung open, and I and the two men peered in; and then says I, 'I'll just step in, and see if I can come across any papers belonging to her,' for I must tell you there was no name on her bows, and whatever might have been written on her stern was under water; but scarce had I uttered the above observation when a sort of thin wailing cry came from one of the cabins.

"'Hillo!' says one of my men; 'the crew have gone and left poor pussy behind.'

"'Pussy!' says I, who had caught the cry very clearly, and heard a note in it there was no mistaking; 'that's no cat, lads. Follow me.'

"And I walked straight to the cabin from which the sound appeared to come, and opening the door saw just the kind of sight my mind seemed to have been prepared, by the cry we had heard, to witness. The cabin was a bit of a box with a scuttle over the topmost of a couple of bunks. There were some female garments on the deck, along with an infant's feeding bottle, broken,

and a few other domestic odds and ends only met with at sea when there are women aboard. As we entered, a second small wailing cry came from the upper bunk, and looking, we spied a dead woman in it, with her right arm cast round a baby nine or ten months old. It was impossible to tell that she was dead till we drew close and saw the signs plain. She was a young woman, not more than six or seven and twenty, her hair yellow; and in life I don't doubt she had been pretty enough, but now her face was so strangely white that she might have passed for a figure worked in plaster of Paris. The baby was too young to sit up; he lay—it was a boy, sir—he lay in his dead mother's arm, giving now and again the queer cry we had first heard, the wail an infant utters after it has exhausted itself in crying for hours. I picked him up out of the bunk, and found him wet through, and his flesh like stone for the cold. His mother's clothes—if the woman were his mother, which I don't doubt—were streaming wet too, and this made us suppose that she had been driven from the deck by the washing water, and had entered her cabin and lain down to die there.

“The men spoke hurriedly about how it came to pass that these two should have been left alone in the wreck. Who was she? I said there was no accounting for what happened at sea. She might have been the wife of the master, who was drowned in the storm, and left no one to look after her; or all hands might have perished in getting the boats over; or the crew might have forgotten her when they put off; there was no telling. There lay the woman dead, I said; and I gave the baby to one of the men named Nipper to hold whilst I pulled off my coat to wrap the little chap up in, for he trembled like a shivering bird with the cold,

and kept all on wailing, as if our handling him and the sound of our voices had put a bit of life into him. We looked hurriedly into the other cabins, but they were empty, and we could find no papers. There was no good bringing the dead mother along with us to bury; the ship she was in was her rightful coffin, and being very deep, with her main hatch open, I rightly reckoned that the next bit of sea that got up would sink the wreck fast enough. I don't say I didn't mumble a prayer as I came away holding the little chap. It was an affecting sight to see that young woman lying there so lonely—quite recently dead as we might suppose by her little one being alive; and when I took a last peep at her I almost felt as if she knew that I was taking her baby away from her.

“We handed the infant into the boat, and shoved off for the barque, that lay hove to waiting for us about half a mile to leeward.

“‘What have you there, Mr. Roband?’ sings out Captain Blackett, leaning over the rail.

“‘A baby, sir,’ I answers, and I pulled my coat a bit open to let him see the little face inside of it.

“‘Well, well,’ cries he, tossing his hands. ‘Look sharp and get aboard.’

“All hands were staring over the side when I handed the baby up, and there went a deal of hoarse whispering among the men as they pressed forward to see the waif. I carried him to the captain—the worthiest man, sir, with the tenderest heart that ever sailed a ship; he pulled off his cap as if awed by the misery and suffering that was typified by the bairn, and his eyes filled with tears as he gazed down upon it.

“‘And the mother lies dead yonder, Mr. Roband?’ says he, pointing to the wreck.

“‘Ay, sir,’ says I.

“‘God receive her!’ says he. ‘D’ye understand the management of babies, Mr. Roband?’

“‘Why, I have two of my own,’ I answered; ‘but I was so much away at sea when they were little ones that I can’t say I ever had a chance of watching what my wife did to ’em to keep ’em healthy. But what we have to do with this baby,’ says I, ‘is to feed him and get him warm at once.’

“‘Then take him below—take him below, Mr. Roband,’ cries the captain in a tremulous voice. ‘Give him your attention, sir, and never mind about your duties until you’ve got this poor little creature into shipshape condition.’

“Well, I carried him to my cabin, and sung out to the steward to help me to undress him, for the thought of handling this frail and delicate object alone unnerved me. I’d any day rather have the job of taking in the masts of a two thousand ton ship than the handling of a baby for ten minutes. Both the steward’s and my fingers were square-ended, and we had to be very careful in hauling out the safety-pins and clearing the little chap of the things he was dressed in. He cried so that I was in an agony, making sure we were hurting him; but the steward said, ‘No, I know the nature of infants; it would be unnatural if they didn’t cry; it’s a fashion their lungs have of growing.’

“‘Are you sure?’ says I.

“‘Cocksure,’ says he; ‘haven’t I seven of my own, Mr. Roband?’

“When the baby was wrapped up in one of my flannel shirts, that being softer than any blanket we had aboard, the steward went and warmed some Swiss milk at the galley fire; and whilst I was sitting waiting for

the steward, with the baby lying on my knee, the captain comes in.

“‘God help this poor little one!’ says he. ‘What age do you take him to be, Mr. Roband?’

“‘Not a year old,’ says I.

“‘Not a year old!’ he cried. ‘How wonderful are the ways of Providence, that a tiny bubble of humanity like this should be left unharmed by a storm that, maybe, has drowned all the rough and sturdy fellows who filled that vessel! It’s like seeing an iron ship beaten to pieces by seas amid whose hollows you observe the little stormy petrel securely flying.’

“The steward arrived with the warm milk and a spoon, and we turned to to feed the baby. I tried my hand, but it was no good; I couldn’t get the milk down his throat; it capsized down his neck, and his being ravenous and crying made the job the more difficult.

“‘Here, give me hold, sir,’ says the steward; so I put the baby on his knee.

“Well, he knew more about it than I, and got a fair caulker of milk into the little ’un, and after a bit the little chap fell asleep, whereupon he was laid down in my bunk, and there he was, quiet enough.

“Sir, we had some hope of his thriving after this. He was a sort of trial in his way, for he wanted washing, and dressing, and feeding, and looking after, and it came hard upon us, who hadn’t the fingers nor the understanding for such work. He was a beautiful boy. I never saw finer eyes in an infant; blue as the heavens under which we were sailing, and a lovely little figure, sir. Sometimes when it would come to my turn to undress him I’d let him lie naked on a flannel shirt stretched across my knees, and tickle him and make him laugh, until the dropping of a tear, like a parched pea

down my cheek, would make me feel that I was acting the fool, and allowing thoughts of my home and of this bairn's loneliness to trouble me too much. He had but the clothes we found him in; so the captain and I gave each of us a soft calico shirt to one of the men forward, a neat hand with the needle, a chap named Claw, to make into a couple of suits of linen for the baby; and this and a knitted waistcoat, and a swathing of flannel round his little starn and legs, kept him tidy and warm and comfortable. We all got mighty fond of him. We'd bring him on deck and lay him in the fold of a sail or on the ensign when the weather was fine and warm, and then you'd see him kicking up his legs in the sunshine, toasting his tiny toes in it, and looking at his fingers and talking to himself. He made the barque more human than ever I thought a vessel could be rendered. He begot a strong home feeling in us all; and you'd see the moving fancies he'd put into the men when they'd creep aft—and I never pretended to notice them—to have a look at the little 'un. Many a stream of tobacco juice I've seen them squirt overboard from the quarter-deck after watching the baby, as if their hearts were too full to suffer 'em to wait until they got forward to spit.

“But one day, sir, there came an end to this. It must have been the cutting of a tooth, I think. He had a fit, but pulled through it; and we thought him all right, and I left him sleeping and looking comfortable enough in my bunk, whilst I went on deck. We were in lat. 28° S. I had been on deck two hours, when the steward came up through the companion, and, approaching me slowly and speaking very solemnly, he says—

“‘Mr. Roband,’ he says, ‘little Jimmy’—that was the name he went by—‘little Jimmy,’ he says, ‘has gone to jine his mother.’

"I started, and said, 'What's that you say?'

"He answered, 'Our little un's dead, sir.'

"I ran below and found the captain in my cabin, looking at the baby that lay a corpse in my bunk. I had grown wonderfully fond of the bairn, sir, and the sight broke me down, and one or two heaving sobs came from me, no more to be helped by me than the tightness in my throat. Oh, sir, it was as if a beautiful little Indian bird that you had cherished and looked after had died of the Cape cold in spite of your love. Only this was an immortal being, a fellow-creature, a little baby that we had plucked from the very brink of an ocean grave into which his mother's dead embrace was dragging him; and we had learned to love him.

"'He is gone!' said Captain Blackett; 'tis God's will, Mr. Roband. We did our duty by him—we could not have done more.'

"'We may take it, sir, that his mother wanted him, says the steward.

"'Ay, steward, and her entreaty has been answered,' says the captain, with a glance aloft.

"I could not take any hand in equipping the little mite for his funeral. I was too much upset, sir. The sailmaker made a tiny hammock for him, and they put his hands together, and smoothed the little wreaths of yellow hair upon his head, and dressed him in clean things; and, before he was stitched up, all hands lay aft to say good-bye, and ne'er a man among them that entered the cabin but stopped to give the little cold face a kiss before leaving. We kept him till next day, and buried him after eight bells had been made. It was a green, windy, glistening morning; the emerald seas ran at us, melting in froth as they came; and the shadows of the men gathered around the gangway, swayed at our feet as the



barque rolled over the surges and as the dancing sun darted beams like spears of light from the clouds through which he swung. Oh, sir! the contrast of that little hammock upon the grating with the huge grave that was to receive it! The service was almost more than some of us could bear—I'd see the men turn their heads away, and look down; and when at last it came to the passage that's a signal at sea for the tilting of the body into the water, we all let our breath out in a sob as the tiny hammock sped like a snowflake over the side and vanished in the slant of a sea whose breaking summit flashed a rainbow over the spot."

## *THE LAST MAN.*

A SMALL iron, full-rigged ship was in latitude ten degrees north of the Equator, outward bound for a New Zealand port. The sun would be setting in an hour ; already his disk was rayless and of a dark and angry gold, and his reflection lay in a broad and waving dazzle upon the western swell. A pleasant draught of air, blowing softly over the port quarter, had kept the light canvas sleeping all the afternoon ; but the lower sails hung up and down, and, as the ship leaned upon the gentle undulations, the tender swinging of their folds wafted cool currents over the fevered decks, as though some gigantic punkah-wallah, perched aloft, were fanning the ship. The deep blue of the sea, scarcely wrinkled by the breeze, stretched around, and the water-line was like an azure cincture clasped, where the glory of the sun hung, by a plate of gold ; but over the side the water was of an exquisite transparent green, in which you could see the metal hull of the vessel wavering till the bend hid it ; and it was enough to possess a man, half-blinded with the heat that came off the brassy glare under the sun, with a calenture to look into the glass-like emerald profound, and to think of the coolness and sweetness to be got by a lazy floating in the serene surface of that fathomless depth.

All the afternoon it had been blowing a soft air, with

now and again a stronger fold that came out of the north-east with a parching taste in it that might have made it pass for the expiring breath of a rush of atmospheric heat from some blast furnace hidden behind the sea; but one felt that the draughts could not long outlast the sinking of the sun, whose ardency was slowly sucking out all life from the air. Already in the south the water-line ruled the deep violet of the sky with a burnished surface, betwixt which and the heavens there was a trembling of heat in which the blue swam to a height of four or five degrees. Just where that tremulous appearance was you saw a shining speck, the topmast sails of a ship disconnected by refraction from the rest of the fabric; they looked, through the glass, like kites flying in the air, and if there was anything in this world to emphasize the vast expanse of the ocean it was those tiny points of canvas when one came to think how small a handful of miles was needful to sink the big vessel out of sight, to render invisible a hull full of people, perhaps, and loaded with cargo of a value sufficient to render a thousand poor families happy and independent for life ashore.

Still the breeze continued blowing softly as the sun sank. There were wrinkles round the stem of the little iron clipper, and the surface of the green clearness over the side was strown with bubbles that gleamed like emeralds and diamonds and rubies between the shadow of the ship and the light off the sea as they veered slowly astern into the languid, iridescent wake. It was a pretty sight to peer from under the short awning to up aloft, and mark the stunsails spreading further and further as they descended, till the reflection of the great white square of cloths stretched by the swinging-boom shone like a sheet of silver under the black spar; and whenever the,

ship lifted to the swell there'd come from aloft a sound of pattering reef-points and the quiet beating of bunt-lines and the low clatter of rope against rope, which, with the aid of the brook-like murmur of the rippling water at the bows, was like a stirring of fallen leaves disturbed in their shady place by a sudden passage of wind betwixt the dark trunks of trees and along the cool turf.

It was the second dog-watch; no work was doing; and the heat was too great for any kind of diversion. One saw a number of open-breasted, mossy-bosomed seamen overhanging the forecastle rail, pipe in mouth, with drowsy eyes sleepily looking away into the blue distance, whilst a low throaty murmur of voices floated aft from forward, where the black cook, standing in the galley door, was arguing with a Dutch sailor. There was a farmyard noise too of muttering hens, mixed with the routing and grubbing grunt of a pig or two; and a strange eastern bird, secured by the leg, was clawing with beak and talons up and down a fathom or two of fore-stay, whilst in a hoarse sea-note he'd sing out now and again, "Sail ho! my precious eyes, sir! bear a hand! sail ho!" Right aft on the quarter deck, visible from the weather side of the forecastle under the lifted clew of the mainsail, stood the helmsman gripping the wheel, and gnawing upon a quid in his cheek, with many a roll of his gleaming eyes aloft and then into the compass bowl and then upon the sea; the brightness came off the water in a scarlet tremble upon his figure, and often he'd tip his Scotch cap on to the back of his head to pass the length of his arm from the wrist to the elbow over his streaming brow. The captain, a red-faced man in a straw hat, and with a Manilla cheroot in his mouth, paced the deck from the mizzen rigging to the taffrail; the chief mate, who had

charge of the watch, walked in the gangway ; and the second mate, seated on the main hatch, was emptying his third and last sooty pipe.

Slowly the sun sank, brightening out the heavens to far beyond the zenith into an amazing glory of scarlet and red and orange, melting into a sulphurous tinge that died out into a delicate green sky, which in its turn deepened into blue and violet and indigo where the ocean met it in the east, with a star or two glistening where the lovely hue was deepest. A tropical evening, indeed ; and you saw the silver speck of the distant ship's sails trembling above the horizon and catching the farewell ray of the setting luminary, whose light went slipping level to it from the brow of one swell to another until it was like a drop of blood in colour and hung like the red lamp of a distant lighthouse ; though the ashen eastern shadow closed down upon it swiftly and melted it into thin, grey air, even whilst the loftiest of our own clipper's sails were still on fire with the rich hectic of the West, and her ropes like gold wire, and the greased topgallant and royal masts, and whatever else showed a polished surface up aloft, twinkling with ruby stars. Darkness swiftly follows the descent of the sun in these parallels ; there was no twilight, and the night lay in a dusky spangled fold in the east, ere the sun had fairly trailed the skirts of his golden robe off the western sky. The moon would not rise for another two hours ; but the darkness and the coolness were wonderfully sweet after the long spell of roasting daylight. The dew fell till the stars made pearly flakes of it upon the rails and skylights ; and the gentle breeze still blew, though with an ever-waning breath. The ripples now ran in lines of fire from the ship's bows, and strange green shadows, like the vapour rising from smelted tin, brightened and dimmed in

cloudy puffs in the slants of the inky swells, and you saw tendrils and stalks and leaves of phosphoric radiance eddying in the holes in the ship's wake, and glimmering along the lines which marked the breadth of the ebony path she was sailing along. Then in armies the stars overran the velvet-black heavens, with the planets shining in blues and greens, and dropping points of quicksilver into the dark waters, whilst above them the glittering dust of countless worlds lay thick as sand, and often a narrow space of the vast dome would flash out in radiance to the bursting of a meteor, whose momentary bright shining would seem to find an echo, so to speak, in a dim violet glare of lightning down in the south-east.

Two bells—nine o'clock—were struck; one heard the ringing chimes hollowly thrown downwards out of the sails. A dead calm had fallen, the ship lay in a deep slumber upon the gently breathing bosom of the ocean, and nothing seemed awake but the throbbing stars. Not above four miles had been measured since the darkness came down, and now that the night was breathless with a threat of catpaws—on no account to be neglected—on either bow and all around, the captain gave instructions for the stunsails to be taken in and stowed away out of the road of such boxhauling of the yards as might be necessary. This made the ship lively for awhile with the running about and the racing aloft of naked-footed mariners; but presently all was silence again, the captain below taking a glass of grog, the second mate quietly pacing the deck aft, the watch coiled up anywhere for a snooze, a single figure erect on the forecastle, and the sea, like a mirror full of starlight, yet so dark that it was like looking through a haze at the luminaries over the water-line.

Three bells were struck, and scarcely had the last vibration died when the second mate hailed the fore-castle: "Forward there! is there anybody singing below?"

"Nobody singing here, sir," came back the answer promptly.

"Nonsense, man! There's some one singing somewhere below forward, I tell you. Put your head into the scuttle and listen."

There was a pause, and presently back came the reply, "All's still in the fore-castle, sir. There's no singing in this part of the ship."

The second mate walked up to the fellow at the wheel. "Did you hear a man's voice singing just now, before the bell was struck?"

"Yes, sir."

"Didn't the sound come from forward?"

"It seemed like it," answered the helmsman.

"Hush! there it is again," cried the second mate, raising his hand and stretching his head forward, with his ear bent towards the fore-castle.

The sound was distinct enough—it was that of a husky voice singing—but at a distance that made the notes as thin and vibratory as the twanging of a jews-harp heard from afar. It ceased, and was followed by a faint, unearthly laugh, that died out at the moment when a sudden shivering flap of the canvas up in the darkness seemed like a shudder passing through the ship.

"There's some one singing and laughing away out ahead here, sir!" shouted the man on the fore-castle, in a voice that made one suspect he felt his loneliness at that moment.

"What the dickens can it be, and where does it come from?" exclaimed the second mate, stepping to the

rail and looking over. He peered and peered, but the night lay dark upon the water, spite of the starlight, and no deeper shadow stood anywhere upon the glooming surface to indicate the presence of a vessel in the neighbourhood. "Forward there!" he shouted. "Do you see anything?"

"Nothing, sir."

The watch on deck, aroused by this hailing, and gathering its import, clambered on the bulwarks to look around, and the captain, hearing the second mate's voice, came up from the cabin.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"There's been a sound of singing, and a kind of laughing following, coming from somewhere ahead, sir," responded the second mate.

The captain went to the side and took a long look. "Pooh, pooh!" he exclaimed; "it must have been your fancy, sir. Singing and laughing? Why, were any vessel near enough for us to hear such noises we should be bound to see her."

He was walking over to the compass.

"There, sir! you have it now!" cried the second mate.

Once again the same thin wailing singing, borrowing a supernatural character from the darkness, came faint but clear to the ship, followed, as before, by the same reedy, croaking laugh.

"By heaven, Mr. Burton, it's no fancy!" exclaimed the captain, wheeling swiftly round. "But is it a human voice, think you? If so, where in mercy's name can it come from? I say, my lads," calling to the men staring over the bulwarks, "d'ye see anything?"

"Nothing at all, sir, though the sound's plain enough," was the answer, delivered in a tone full of awe.



Suddenly a dim, luminous, grey haze floated up into the eastern sky; it brightened into yellow, and then into a kind of sullen faded red; and in a few moments the upper limb of the moon jutted up, a pale crimson, with a light that made an indigo line of the horizon under her, and as she soared one saw the wake she left trembling in dull gold along the weltering ebony of the swell, till, shooting clear of the deep, with a broadening of delicate lustre around her that quenched the stars there, she shot her level crimson beam at the ship, whose sails took the tinge of feverish radiance, and stood out in phantasmal spaces of mystical light against the darkness and the stars. But speedily transmuting her copper into silver, the luminary threw out a fairy radiance that, flowing to the westernmost sea-line, showed the circle dark and clear all round, and scarcely was her bland and beautiful illumination fairly kindled, when half a dozen voices shouted, "There's a boat out there on the star-board bow!"

"Hush!" cried the captain; and amid the silence there stole down yet again to the awed and astonished listeners the wild, mysterious singing of a man's voice, followed by a peal of laughter.

"Well, whatever it may prove, it must be overhauled," said the captain. "Mr. Burton, call some hands aft to lower away one of the quarter-boats, and go you and see who it is that's singing and laughing away out here in the middle of the ocean."

In a few minutes the boat was pulling away for the dark object to the left of the moon's reflection.

The watch below had turned out, and a crowd of seamen awaited with burning curiosity the issue of this singular encounter.

"It'll be no man's voice as raised that there chantey,"

said one of the oldest, and presumably one of the most ignorant among them, as they overhung the rail. "If I'd been in the old man's place ye might ha' turned to and boiled me afore you'd ha' got me to send a boat to it."

"Why, what d'ye think it is, Bill?" inquired another.

"Think! I don't think at all. 'Tain't my business to think. But d'ye s'pose," replied the old sailor, "that any mortal being with hintellects inside him, such as you and me's got, 'ud tarn to and sing songs—and I dessay comic songs, for what should set him larfin'?—in a hopen boat at this here hour of the night, two or three thousand miles away from land? You bet old Bill knows what he's a talkin' about when he says that if what's come across in that there boat turns out mortal, he'll swaller the biggest pair o' sea boots that's knocking about the forecastle."

Awed by the old sailor's prophetic croaking, to which years of rum and hard weather had communicated a forbidding, sepulchral note, the others fell into deep silence, straining their eyes in the direction of the boats. A half-hour passed before they approached the ship, during which the seamen had been startled by many hoarse and dreadful cries proceeding from the advancing boats, intermixed with shrill and savage laughter, and wild shouts delivered in accents the mariners could not make head nor tail of.

"Well," cried the captain, when the boats were within hail, "what is it you have come across, Mr. Burton?"

"A raving lunatic, sir," answered the second mate. "He's a Spaniard, I think. There's a dead boy in the bottom of his boat that I reckon to be his son. He's been shipwrecked apparently, and there's nothing to eat or drink along with him that we can find."

It was now seen that two of the crew were in the madman's boat holding him. As they drew alongside the wretched maniac began to rave fearfully, sometimes breaking off to sing some weird, tuneless song, then bursting into accents full of heartbreaking entreaty, and afterwards wrestling furiously with the two men who had hold of him, making the boat sway to her gunwales, and uttering shriek after shriek. It was as terrible a scene as ever the moon shone down upon. They had to bind him turn upon turn with ropes in order to drag him aboard, and mad as he was, yet it was evident he knew he was to be separated from the dead boy under the thwarts of his boat, for his struggles were frantic when he saw what they meant to do, every posture was a passionate, delirious yearning towards the corpse, and when finally he was lifted over the rails, his screams and ravings in Spanish sent the hardiest amongst those who had no hand in getting him inboard recoiling with horror. He was little more than a skeleton. When they brought a lantern and examined him they found the remains of what had clearly been a tall, handsome man; but famine had done its work, famine and thirst. A boy might have lifted the emaciated frame, though madness furnished it yet with a horrible vitality, and a degree of life fearful to behold in so shrunken a conformation blazed in his dark eyes, cruelly sunk, and showing like flames in the hollows, whose shocking depth was accentuated by his bushy brows.

The corpse of the lad was reverently dropped over the side, and the boat sent adrift after the ship's name she carried painted on her had been duly noted. There was no doctor on board; but what the kindness of English sailors could do for the poor Spaniard was done. He died on the following afternoon, having ceased

his raving and fallen into a pathetic silence soon after he had been taken below. It could not certainly be known that the boy had been his son.

"But I don't think there could be a doubt of it," said the captain and Mr. Burton, as they stood looking at the dead man, "for mere skeleton as the poor fellow is, there seems to me by the appearance of his face that there was more of a broken heart in his death than the want of food and water."

The man's clothes and belongings, besides the vessel's name, served ultimately to identify him. He was master of a Spanish ship that had sailed from Carthagena three months previous to the discovery of the boat by the English iron clipper. With him had gone his only son. The vessel was never heard of after having been spoken in twenty degrees north latitude, and there could be no doubt that of the numerous crew who were in her the poor captain, when encountered raving mad in an open boat amid the frightful solitude of the great Atlantic, was the last man.

## *A PICTURE.*

"It's cold enough," said a sailor with whom I had paused to exchange a word in answer to his salutation of "What cheer?" "It's cold enough, sir, to nip the shank off a soldier's button. It's cold enough to perish the topmost hank of a Greenlandman's jib." He was right. A fiercer kind of cold I scarcely remember in this climate. It seemed to be independent of the wind—a sort of solid frozen atmosphere that in sheltered corners or in lulls pressed upon you with a sensible weight, as ice might, were it possible for that substance to mould itself to the configuration of your body. It was about seven o'clock in the evening, and it had been pitch dark for nearly three hours. I had walked a couple of miles to the town in which I was staying, and my road had sometimes brought me along the margin of the cliffs, whose dusky fronts stared dead into the east, and at whose base the surf was echoing the seething of the wind in the impenetrable void overhead. Amid the driving gloom on high there would come now and then a spectral break, as though a streak of faint light from some dim gigantic lantern had fallen for a space upon that dark floor. There was no moon, and whence these ghastly faintnesses came was not to be imagined; but whenever they dawned, then in the swift interval of their showing, the

sea assumed a wilder appearance; there was a fiercer throb in every glimmering sweep of white; masses of foam would seem suddenly to leap from the inkiness, broaden into acres, and lay heaving in tracts with a pallid glare at the heavens, till for a spell the ocean took the aspect of a vast moor, glooming out sulkily into black distance under spaces of snow, heaped, and spread, and scattered capriciously by the wind.

One or two squalls drove along as I walked. They came up with an added shadow to the evening, and were charged with a fine hail that stung the skin desperately. I descended the hill that conducted me into the long narrow waterside street by which the town is entered on that side, and passed a number of fishermen's and other seafarers' houses situated in this part, directly facing the sea and not very far above the level of it, for the sand and shingle form but a bit of a slope, and in hard weather the surf rolls its thunder against the low sea-wall and fills the roadway with hissing spume, so that after a tempest the doorways are littered with seaweed, crabs, shells, shingle, and scores of such things. Well, the tide was now half-flood, and the line of white past the dark sloping stretch was some distance off; but the roaring of the breakers could not have been more harshly and thunderously audible had you had your ear close against them; so that on the whole I found a stormier and more piercing character in the night down in this windy, flickering, echoing street than I had taken notice of in the deeper and sterner crying that was to be heard a hundred feet higher. Here and there ahead of me the dark lurching figure of some fisherman would appear and disappear in the jumping, starting flame of one of the few widely sundered lamps; or a light would gleam in some lozenge-paned window; or you would hear a shout

from some deep-sea voice on the beach. Otherwise the long street—if street it can be called—was as deserted as the deck of a derelict, that the wind might hold all alone its mad and whirling dance and raise its shrill shrieking.

I had still three-quarters of a mile before me. When I was half-way down this street, and within a hundred yards or so of a short, solid, black wooden pier, that ran straight out through the surf from the beach, a squall burst down upon me with such force that it drove me towards the houses on my right with my back upon it, and my arms over my ears, to shelter them from the merciless pelting and stinging of the hail and rain. I got into a doorway with a bit of a porch overhead, but it yielded me no protection. This sort of thing would not do at all. I was already half dead with the cold, and two or three more such squalls as that which was now hammering me, and driving the rain in icicles down my neck and back, threatened to finish me up entirely. Suddenly I remembered that a short distance further along there lived the coxswain of the lifeboat belonging to the town, a hearty, genial fellow I had known for some months. In his little home I was sure of finding the warmth and rest I needed, and quitting the doorway where I was gradually getting soaked through, I plumped into the wild weather afresh, and made for my friend Bob Sampson's house as fast as my legs could carry me. His dwelling was a little cottage, with a green rail in front of it. A gas-lamp stood not far off, and the waving light of it danced upon a clean white exterior and a buxom bay window with bright glass and yellow blinds, with the shine inside dimly filtering through them.

I knocked smartly, and in an instant the door was flung open. Then was revealed a picture I do not know I am ever likely to forget. The door opened direct into

the room, and the bright, cheerful interior seemed to stand out upon the revolving blackness of the night like a magic-lantern scene.

"Who's there?" exclaimed the large square-shouldered figure who had opened the door, stooping, with his hand to his brows, to make me out.

I gave him my name.

"Lor' bless me!" he cried. "Step in, sir, step in out of this muckiness. Why, what sort o' business brings a gent like you down to this here part of the town on a night fit to clip a man's ears off his head? Hang me if I didn't think it wur a lifeboat call when I heerd you knock, only it wasn't quite lumpish enough—eh, mother? Step in, sir."

I did so, and he closed the door. I found myself in a fair-sized room, pleasantly lighted by the combined flames of an oil-lamp and a roaring fire in a capacious chimney, the mantel of which was within a foot or two of the low ceiling. In the centre of the room was a round table covered with a coarse white cloth, and upon it was spread a homely meal of bread, cheese, cups of cocoa, a piece of salt meat, and other such fare. In an armchair—and a wonderful armchair it was, with a back about five feet high—sat an old man with a bald head and a wisp or two of silver hair upon his collar, a long clay pipe in one hand, and a cup of cocoa on his knee. He turned his head slowly as I entered, and gave me a nod, and the lamplight shone upon a face that might have passed for sixty if it had not been for the lustreless eyes with patches of white in the irises and heavily veined with red.

"My wife's father," said Sampson; "harder of hearing than that there wall, sir, and so you'll excuse him for not conversing."



At the table were seated Mrs. Sampson, who rose and dropped me a curtesy, a comely, honest-looking, mild-eyed woman, and the coxswain's four children, one a pretty girl of eighteen, and the youngest a bairn of about four. It was the pleasantest scene to come upon out of such a night as that which any one could imagine. The room was delightfully warm, and a dozen of nautical odds and ends scattered about made the apartment the fittest in the world wherein to sit and listen to the muffled roar of the surf, that seemed to sound a long way off. I noticed a couple of excellent models of a brig and a cutter, a rude painting in oils of my friend the coxswain in yellow sou'wester and sleeved waistcoat; a presentation address, in a gilt frame; a rough water-colour of a smack in distress, a shelf or two of books, a big old-fashioned Bible, with a great anchor in faded blue painted or stamped upon the cover; a smoke-dimmed chart of the world, as old, may be, as Vancouver's day; and other things of a like kind. But Sampson himself was the most marine of all the details of his room. He had been ravaged by the smallpox when at sea, which gave his face a fretted, honeycombed look, like pebbles you may sometimes find on the shore liberally holed by the action of the water or by marine insects. In the midst of this rough surface of skin shone a pair of small, keen, merry blue eyes, so full of good nature that it was like listening to a hearty, honest laugh to meet them. His hair was black, plentiful, and scattered, as though newly combed by a gale of wind; he had a thick, black beard that filled the space under his chin, and a broad, jolly, smiling mouth. He was dressed in warm pilot-cloth trousers and waistcoat, and, as in a hoarse, strong voice, he begged me to pull off my coat and draw up to the table and take some supper along with them

standing the while in a kind of shy posture, with his arms up and down with his sides and rounding out at the elbows, and his legs full of the sort of yielding that comes into a man's joints out of heaving planks, he looked as fine a specimen of an English sailor as ever a shipmaster would be delighted to see "sign on."

I was speedily at home, warming myself with cocoa, toasting myself at the fire, whilst the deaf old chap in the armchair took alternate pulls at his pipe and sips at his cup, and the children eyed me inquisitively, and the wife, smiling, glanced here and there to make sure that there was nothing to discredit her in the homely show before me. Meanwhile, the wind was freshening fast into a gale, the booming of the surf took a more savage note, at intervals the wide chimney roared as though a thunder-cloud had burst over the orifice, and the window-glass was lashed fiercely by showers of hail and wet swept full against it by the wind coming along madder and madder yet across some hundreds of leagues of precipitous waters, whitening under a sky of ink.

"It's breezing up fast, sir," said Sampson; "there'll be some mischief done to-night, I doubt. I'm standing by for a call. I hope it mayn't come, I'm sure. It's not fit weather to be shipwrecked in; but there's always some pilots or masters going wrong in nights after this here pattern; and if it ain't their fault it's the wessels, which is all the same to them as lives forrards."

"If it's bad to be wrecked in it's equally bad to attempt a rescue in," said I.

"Ay, you may well say that, sir," exclaimed the wife. "I've never yet asked my husband to give the service up; but when it comes weather of this kind, and a boat that's served her men some ugly tricks—ay, ye

know it, Robert—I can't help feeling that he's done his share, and might stop ashore without shame."

"That's how the women argue," said Sampson, laughing; "they like the medals; and, poor as the pay is, they don't object to it. But when it comes to earning it——"

"Oh, don't call it earning, father," said the pretty daughter; "it's life-saving. There's little enough to earn. The reward is in the feeling of rescuing human creatures from death."

"*I'm* not talking of earning, Susie," exclaimed Sampson. "I'm only saying that the women like what follows our going out, but they object to the jobs which brings what follows in. Have another cup o' cocoa sir; it's the most fattening drink you can take."

"The men rush away in blind haste," continued the wife, addressing me, "and forget what we women go through whilst waiting for them to come back. Robert undergoes more sufferin' perhaps when he's away; but my lot's the hardest to bear. You hear the wind?"—lifting her finger. "Think of lying a whole night awake listening to that sound and the noise of the sea out there, and wondering what's happening in the boat. They've got the excitement; we've got to think of them. Oh, Susie, it's true, isn't it? You remember last Tuesday week a twelvemonth? They rescued nine men—but they were three days away—blown to another port, sir; and we gave them up for lost. I tell you, it's sometimes more than a woman who loves her husband can bear."

The old fellow in the armchair watched his daughter's face whilst she was speaking, and smoked with a singular expression of complacency as if he could hear what she said and was much gratified by her

eloquence. I saw that Sampson did not much relish his wife's remarks, and so I contrived to change the subject. The supper things were removed ; I was now dry and warm ; outside, the biting wind was thundering, and squall after squall was flinging its fury against the house-front ; it was still early night, and I was in no hurry to get home ; so I accepted Sampson's offer to make myself snug in front of the fire, as he expected before long, he said, to find the " breeze " turning into a dry gale, and then I should be able to run home without getting wet. Coal was piled upon the fire, and the ruddy blaze filled the room with a warm light that rippled red on picture-glasses and the well-polished old furniture ; and when we gathered about the roaring hearth and thunderous chimney in a semi-circle, we thought we formed as cosy a party as ever blazing embers shone upon. It was the wild weather outside that set us, I suppose, talking about lifeboats and their crews again, spite of the cause that had made me shift the conversation before ; and I remember saying to Sampson that few inland dwellers, catching sight of the boatmen of some of the watering places would imagine that those loafing, leaning, lazy figures in farnaught trousers were the men who, on such a night as this, for instance, would be the first to tumble out of their beds to man the lifeboat, putting on their clothes as they ran.

" Ay," says Mrs. Sampson, " and often with empty stomachs, sir. It's but starving work with those men in winter time, and my husband 'll tell you of watermen who have gone out in the lifeboat after fasting all day, and who've remained away all night, and often the day followin', without so much as a chip of biscuit to swallow."

It's true enough," exclaimed the coxswain ; and

then, a droll look coming into his face whilst he pulled his pipe out of his mouth and looked into the bowl of it, he said, "D'ye know, sir, why it is that boatmen always carry their hands in their pockets?"

I replied I did not know.

"Then I'll tell you," said he. "Once upon a time a gent with a very good-natured heart arrived in Folkestone, where he found all the boatmen creeping about on their hands and knees. He steps up to one of 'em and says, 'Mate,' he says, 'why don't you stand upright like I do?' 'Why,' answers the boatman, 'I'm used to this 'ere posture and enjoys it.' 'But have you ever tried to stand up?' says the gent. No,' replies the boatman. On that the gent puts him right up agin a post. 'Well,' says the gent, 'how do you like that position?' 'Why,' answers the boatman, 'it sartinly feels natural; but what am I to do with these here flippers?' says he, wavin' his hands about. On which the gent told him to go and get a pair of pockets made in his breeches, so deep as to come up to his elbows, which he did, and finding that standing on his feet with his hands in his pockets came most natural to him, he up and told his mates about it, and they, trying the new hattitude, and liking of it, spread the news, and so it came at last to be the rig'lar fashion among boatmen all round the coast."

In this fashion we chatted, I for one scarcely heeding the deepening of the tempest's notes, though if ever a wilder roaring than usual called my attention to it it was only to make me more sensible yet of the warmth and snugness of the modest interior in which I was seated, and to set me thinking of the pleasure a seafaring man would find in a stout cottage of this kind, with old ocean's gray and melancholy surges rolling to his feet, wife and children to bear him company and to

listen with loving interest to his yarns and arguments. The tall old family clock—a contrivance like a pump, surmounted by a wooden sailor—ticked hoarsely behind the old man in the armchair, and its long, lean hands pointed to a quarter to nine. I was glancing at it, thinking that at nine o'clock I must be off, rain or no rain, when the wildest squall that had yet struck the house shrieked upon it with a pelting of hail that was like a broadside of grape; and the uproar of it in the chimney and upon the windows, and all about, was so great that it brought us all to a dead pause, and we sat listening.

It was then that there fell upon the door three heavy blows, so strongly administered you might have sworn some one was trying to kick an entrance into the house.

In a trice Sampson bounded from his chair. "I knew it 'ud come!" he cried; and, making a dash at his wife, he kissed her, swept his hand towards the children as if to include them in the embrace, jerked a monkey-jacket off a peg, and ran out with his coat in one hand and his sou'-wester in the other.

"Was that a call for the lifeboat?" I cried.

The wife, whose figure had drooped on a sudden, like a flower on a broken stem, answered in a tremulous voice, "Yes, sir; that's how he serves me. He don't allow himself time even to kiss the children."

In hot haste I pulled on my coat, being determined to witness the departure of the lifeboat, hurriedly called a good-bye to Mrs. Sampson and her daughters, and left the house. The opening of the door filled the room with the freezing storm. I slung myself rather than walked into the wild blast, whilst I saw Mrs. Sampson and her eldest girl leaning against the door with all their

strength to close it after me. For some moments it was as much as I could do to fetch a breath, and there I stood panting against the sweeping gale, whose screaming in my ears drowned for a space the bellowing of it overhead and the pouring and crashing of the near surf, almost blinded by the blackness that, despite the near gaslight flame, seemed impenetrable after the cheerful illumination of the room from which I was fresh. Recovering myself, I pushed forward, often finding myself pinned by the wind against the side of a house. The boathouse was not far off—just beyond the pier—but it took me ten minutes to reach it. Long before this, however, my eyes had recovered their use, and I could see the ocean—a white plain, the surf rolling in hills upon the shelving beach, and going away in a leaping, glimmering dimness till it met the black sky, which ran up into an inky space full of ceaseless thunder. Oh, the maddening cold of the wind yelling into the land off those leagues of rushing snow! At moments I thought I could see a faint light coming and going far out upon the waters—a flickering gleam such as a flare made in distress might show on such a night; but it was more than I could endure to keep my eyes pressed, even for a moment or two, against the sting and hurl of the storm, loaded with spray and hail and rain.

I found a group of dark figures at the boathouse, and learnt that the crew were in the boat, and that she would be launched in a moment. It happened almost when I arrived. She was lying on skids with an off-rope secured to an anchor buried beyond the surf; and suddenly you saw her in the faint shine of the white water gliding down on her bilge, the crew, like statues of iron in her, waiting to haul upon the off-rope, and then she struck the first mountain of foam and went

clean under, and leapt out again a black shape, with the men hauling; and then she vanished afresh, and once more swept out, standing on end in a moment's pause that made one deaf with the hammering of one's heart in one's ears. What followed I could not distinguish, for the spray was blinding; but I heard the men near me shouting that they had taken to the oars, and, by blinking and turning my back a moment and then looking again, I could just see her like a drop of ink upon the white wilderness, until her terrific plunges hid her, and she vanished as utterly as though she had foundered.

I could do no good by staring into that piercing gale. I turned my steps homewards, putting up, heaven knows, an earnest prayer on behalf of those valiant men who were facing death in as wild, fierce, and ghastly a form as it can present itself to man; but it was not until I was seated before my own fireside, listening to the savage crying of the hurricane, that I contrasted the cheerful, secure home Sampson had quitted for his deadly encounter with the ocean on behalf of human life, and realized to the full all that was displayed by the conduct of our lifeboatmen, who hasten without a thought, save what must be the noblest of all desires, from their wives and children, their beds, the warm shelter of their roofs, to the rescue of the perishing seaman, in the eye of a gale so bitter that tears turn to icicles upon the cheek before it, and into a sea so furious that brain and heart are stunned by the madness of the spectacle and by the uproar that comes out of it.\*

\* The small sums paid to the men who risk their lives should be compared with the substantial salaries received by the officials of the Lifeboat Institution. It is not a little discreditable that a charity supported eminently on behalf of the Merchant Service should select its overseers and others from persons who have served in the Navy.



## A SAILOR'S WEDDING.

"I WAS able seaman aboard a ship named the *Empire*," began the relator of the following little marine recollection, "and we arrived at an English port, which there is no occasion to give the name of, with a cargo of hard wood. I had made up my mind to sail again in that ship, for she was comfortable in all respects, deck-house dry and airy, eatables above the ordinary, and the captain a sober, clean-mouthed man, who never wanted to say nothen to you perwided you never wanted to say nothen to him and went on with your work. Well, there was five others as was all agreed to go out again in the same ship, and for that purpose we turned to and put up at a boarding-house, where we was all together, and pretty middling well looked after by the master of the house, as was a Dutchman with a difficult name and one arm, and respected by his neighbours.

"It might ha' been two days after we'd taken up what was a-owing to us, when there come the bo'sun of the ship to our boarding-house, and findin' we was all in the house, walks in. His name was Jimmy Green, and he was a short man of about four and thirty year old. He was a good shipmate, but a very quiet sort o' person, and some of us 'ud think he was a little bit religious, and others that it wasn't that so much as that he did no

thinkin' outside his work, and consequently when he'd done singing out, and the like of that, he'd left himself nothing more to say. Well, as I says, he comes in and looks round at us seriously, and then sits down, on which I says—

“‘What'll you have, Jimmy?’

“And he answers, ‘Well, I dessay a little drop o’ gin at this hour of the day ’ll do a man no hurt; it’ll taste clean after rum;’ and so it was ordered, an’ Jimmy he drunk of it up.”

Here my friend pulled out his pipe, and paused to look into the bowl of it.

“After he had drunk of it up he smiles, and says, ‘Mates, I’ve just looked in to tell you that I’m going to be married.’

“‘When?’ says one of us.

“‘Why, to-morrow,’ he says. ‘I was hingaged,’ he says, ‘to the same party afore we sailed away last woyage,’ he says; ‘but I never said nothen about it, because, mates,’ says he, smiling again, ‘it was nobody’s business but mine.’

“‘Who’s the party?’ asks a young chap named Jack Hall.

“Jimmy Green looked shy at this, and then seemed to reflect, and then he says, ‘Well, it’s Mag Brewer.’

“‘What!’ I sings out, ‘d’ye mean the daughter of old Billy Brewer, as keeps the Dook o’ Sussex public-house?’

“Jimmy nods. We all knew her, for that there public was a great favourite with sailors, and though, maybe, we all quietly wondered at Jimmy’s taste, we was not going to make ourselves offensive to a shipmate by saying that we was surprised at his choice, and that we should reckon ourselves poor fists at love-making if we couldn’t do better than Mag Brewer; so one of us says—

“‘Well, Jimmy, it’s to be hoped Mag ’ll make you a good wife. Better not spend too much money on furniture, mate, for fear that when you come back it’ll be all gone. If a wife goes a man can get another, but if his home goes along with her it’s a different matter. A home’s not to be got by drinking out o’ the same glass as a girl and squeezing of her hand, but a wife is.’

“‘I know all about that,’ Jimmy answers, ‘and I’m not here to arguefy, but to ask you all to the weddin’.’

“I was about to answer, when Tommy Stubbs broke in.

“‘Jimmy,’ says he, ‘I was once shipmate with a cook as wur married when he didn’t know nothen about it. He was a darkey, and it happened at Port Glasgow. He’d got five casks of grease as he’d biled down and otherwise collected during the voyage, and each cask was worth two pound. Some gals heard of this, and they got a few sailor chaps to bring him along to a whiskey shop, and there he was made drunk, and in that condition was married, in Scotch fashion, to one of the gals, and, after his money was spent, he was kicked out, and went again as cook of the same vessel. I met him after he was married——’

“‘Look here, Thomas,’ says the bo’sun, ‘never you mind about yarns of that kind. Will you come to my weddin’, mates? that’s the question.’

“Well, we said yes, we’d go to his wedding; on which, looking at me, he says, ‘I shall want a best man. Will you be my best man, Dick?’ he says.

“‘Why,’ says I, ‘I don’t exactly understand ye. What do you mean by a best man?’

“‘Why,’ he answers, ‘it’s a person as keeps close to the man that’s being married till the job’s over. He stands alongside of him in church, and if there’s any

talking at the meal that follows these here circumstances, he ups and makes a speech. It's likewise customary for him to pay for the hire of the cabs as fetches the company to dinner after the sarvice. This bout Mag reckons 'll cost about two and twenty shillings for cab-hire, so, Dick, if ye're opposed to that outlay, say the word, my lad, and I'll cast about for some one else as best man.'

"I told him I didn't object, and that I'd be best man, and asked at what hour the sarvice took place, and he says at eleven.

"'Where?' says Tommy.

"Jimmy he names a Church o' Hengland.

"'I know it,' I says, 'and I'll be there. Who'll order the cabs?'

"He answers that I was to leave all that to Mag; there would be nothen for me to do but to pay.

"'And d'ye say, Jimmy, there's to be a meal afterwards?' says one of us.

"'Ay,' says Jimmy, 'a tip-top dinner. Perlite people calls it breakfast, but dinner must be the correct term, seeing the hour at which you eat.'

"Well, when next day came, we all dressed ourselves up in our best clothes, and as we counted upon some dancing, we put on light shoes. We then sallies out three abreast, and walks till we arrives at the Church o' Hengland. There was some women and gals come to see the show a-sittin' on the benches, and as there was nobody else we hung together in the door till Jimmy and his party should come along. There was pretty near a melhee—or a quarrel, if you like the term better—'tween Tommy Stubbs and Bill Best. Bill he was chewin' and spittin', and Tommy told him he mustn't do that in a Church o' Hengland. Bill said it was a sailor's weddin', and he should chew if he liked. Then Tommy says that

even a monkey wouldn't chew tobacco in church, and, this being answered, led 'em into pretty nigh what I call a melhee. Well, it was cut short by the arrival of Jimmy, whose face shone with soap like a brass binnacle hood, and his bow legs were scarcely noticeable in the loose cloth pants he'd shipped. Afore long he was followed by the bride and her father, and some females, and then the parson showing himself behind the railing in the bows of the church, we all made that way, me sticking close to Jimmy's tails, understanding that, as his best man, that was my duty.

"Most of my mates was too shy to look about them; and I'd catch sight of 'em staring at the parson as if he was a magistrate and they were up for mutiny afore him. But I wasn't so timid; it cost me a good deal to keep from laughin' out when I see Jimmy begin to git pale as a shirt collar with nervousness, and his knees a trembling so that his pants shook as if there was a breeze of wind blowing. Mag looked middlin' blooming. I forget her dress, I'm sure; but I know that it consisted of plenty of colours, and that her bonnet was big enough to have stowed her little old father away in. She was no beauty, at least to my way of thinking, for she'd got but one eye to begin with, though I allow that she had first-class teeth, as regular as the keys of a pianey and pretty nigh as big. There was no doubt that Jimmy was a marryin' of her for a home, and with a eye to the Dook o' Sussex, and I fell a-thinkin' whilst the parson was praying, for it was the fust wedding as ever I was consarned in; and it struck me, as I stood considering, that even a female with one eye was better than a ship's forecastle, that more was to be done by stopping ashore along with her in a public-house kept by her father than by working the bones of your body out through your

shirt aboard ship on wages it makes a man scorn himself to mention."

Here my friend lighted his pipe.

"Indeed," he continued, "these here notions wrought me up to that pass that if there'd been e'er a young woman with the means of establishtin' a home in that there church willin' to be married, bile me alive if I wouldn't ha' stepped forward, laid hold of her hand, and joined Jimmy and Mag at the railing. But it warn't to be," he exclaimed gloomily, "and so I stood partly a wonderin' and partly a thinkin' and partly a listenin'. When it came to the parson askin' Jimmy if he was willin' to have Mag for a wife, he gives a grin and pulls a bit of hair over his forehead, and answers, 'I believe ye, sir.'

"This was wrong, and he was corrected, but one of my mates who was standing close behind me lets drive his elbow into my ribs, and says in a hoarse voice, 'Did you ever hear such a rum question, Dick? What the blazes should Jimmy have gone to the expense of that there suit o' clothes and a gold ring and the likes o' that, if he warn't willing to marry his young woman?'

"Here several people said, 'Hush!' and the parson stared at us through his glasses, and little Mr. Brewer shook his fist at us; so we shut up and remained quiet till the job was over, and we was out of the church.

"Well," continued my friend, smoking slowly and thoughtfully, "the dinner was sartainly an A 1 business. The cabs I had to pay for fetched the company—they was nearly all ladies as came in them cabs—and we was a tidy middling lot. There was a long hupstairs room that was used as a smoking room in the Dook o' Sussex, and it was cleared out, and there we had the dinner. What did we have, d'ye ask? Why, pretty near every-

thing that was goin'. There was several kinds of pork, piles of wegetables, beef and mutton, more pudden than a ship's company could have eaten had each man's appetite been as long as the keel of a line-of-battle ship, and I dunno what more. For drink we had beer, and in the middle of dinner Mag's father stands up and says he might as well inform the company that in spirits he had made up his mind to stand as many bottles as 'ud give every person in that company two glasses apiece, and that if any gentleman or lady wanted more they'd have to pay for it themselves. This speech we all of us cheered, for two glasses besides the ale was handsome treatment from one man. As the eatin' progressed Jimmy looked downright greasy with happiness and enjoyment. Ay, he did. I never in all my life see any man shine more. He sung out to me that his delight lay in feeling that the ceremony was over. He said it had lain heavy on his sperrits all the voyage, and came near to suffocatin' him that morning. The females made a good deal of his wife. She cleared all the platefuls as was put before her, yet they all feared she was starving herself, poor thing—that she was letting her feelings get the better of her, but that she must make a heffort to command herself. They had a bottle of brandy at their end o' the table, and by means of it she not only succeeded in commanding herself, but her husband likewise, for, in consequence o' some answer he made to a red-nosed lady sittin' next to Brewer, she fetched him a clout over the mug that caused me to reckon some one had let fall a dish, and whilst poor Jimmy was a rubbing himself, she burst into tears, says she only hopes and prays she's been guided right in what she's done, but that she can't help fearin' the worst, and so she goes on maundering and miauling till Jimmy shuts her up by putting one

arm round her neck, and holding some brandy to her face with the other, a hattitude that seemed to strike all the ladies present as being very graceful and hornamental, for they all sung out, 'Brayvho, Mr. Green ! Very pretty indeed, sir.'

"Well," continued my friend, filling another pipe after a long grin over his thoughts, "before dinner was fairly over we was all mad to be dancing, and scarce was the last spoonful swallowed when we sends down for the fiddler that had been sitting in the tap-room awaiting, and up he comes. To get him out of the road, we turned to and routed out a hempty cask, which we stuck up in a corner, and atop of that we put a chair, on to which we hoists the fiddler, with a can of liquor between his legs, and tells him to fire away. He lets fly with a polka, and in a minute there were we all, a-revolving and hopping, and bumping up agin one another, whilst the floor shook as if all hands was bound to go through it. It was rayther warm work, for the fit was a tight one, and to tell you the truth, now that I come to think of it, I can't recollect that there was a thin female in the room; they were all strappers; and some of 'em with feet with soles broad enough to serve as a dinner-table, and if they *did* take a man's foot in passing, I tell yer it made him sing out. Well, the warm work obliged us to send for the liquor, and Brewer's two glasses apiece was soon consumed. I thought perhaps that Jimmy might ha' stood Sam for a round or two, but then, d'ye see, he was now old Brewer's son-in-law, and to pay for what was drunk himself would be doing the house no good; so whoever wanted liquor after that had to order it of the potman who stood at the door. I reckon this here drinking and treating must have pretty near paid for the dinner; for every man was cleared out afore he was



turned out, what with ordering for himself and then ordering for the ladies.

“Well, we was dancing away, falling and bumping against each other like a fleet of ships that’s parted and blown away to leeward all foul of one another, when a bit of a shindy crops up. Mag, who was pretty well primed, gets jealous of a girl that Jimmy had got in tow and was dancing and cutting capers with. What followed I’m sure I don’t know ; but that was the beginning, and not long after there was the two women goin’ for each other’s faces with their finger-nails, a tearin’ off one another’s finery and making a pretty splutter. We rolled atween them and so parted them, but not afore a little blood was flowin’ However, we was all too merry to be stopped by a melhee like this, so we sings out to the fiddler to fire away again. Well, I was slidin’ and hoppin’ about with my arm round the biggest gal in the room, and the room itself going round us a good deal faster than we was a twirling, when I took notice of something wrong with the music. Being a bit merry, I may say, I reckoned the mistakes was in my head, and I tried to keep time to the altered tune, thinking that my feet was travelling too fast ; but there was no dancing to be done in that way, and I was turning to ask the fiddler to mind his time when I see him lean forward with a smile and fall plump off his chair on top of the cask on to the floor, where he lay with his fiddle broke, and himself dead drunk, having had the can between his legs filled once too often.

“Well, we rolled him out of the way, but there was no making headway without music. Then Mag, who had let Jimmy clean her face, and who’d stopped sheddin tears, sings out that there was a pianey in a sitting-room downstairs, if some of us boys ’ud fetch him up. I

reckon old Brewer wouldn't ha' stood this suggestion if he hadn't had a drop too much; but he was sot up at the end of the room in that foolish condition that he'd only ha' grinned had they emptied his till afore him. Well, four of my mates went down to fetch the pianey, and a pretty job they made of it. They broke down the rail of the staircase, and they likewise knocked a leg off the hinstrument, and when they got it into the room at last, after a deal of swearing and drunken larkin', they all seemed to roll in on top of it, and it was not easy to say which was the pianey and which was the sailors until it and them had got stood upright.

"Well, we shored the pianey up, and after a good deal of askin', a female was found as could play it. And when she sat down the first thing she struck up was 'Jack Robinson,' which set my feet agoing, for if there was one dance I could manage better than another it was the sailor's hornpipe. My mates knew that, and sung out for me to give 'em a shuffle; and the company, hearing this, joined in, so I consented, and a table was drawed out into the middle of the room, and I got atop of it, and at it I went, toe and heel, shakes and side shakes, cuts and side cuts, until I'm blowed if I didn't dance clean through the table, which guv way under me. However, I finished it out upon the floor, and when I'd ended, up starts a sailor chap, as was a stranger to me, and says he'll dance me for a pound.

"'Well,' says I, 'I've danced, and now you can turn to, and the company shall decide. I don't want no money; but whoever the company says is the worst dancer shall stand drinks all round.'

"He consented and stood up, but he worked away with his heels whilst I only used my toes, and the company, knowing the difference and approving of the

correct style of dancing the sailor's hornpipe, gave it in my favour, on which he steps up and offers to fight me. I was perfectly willing, and had pulled off my coat, when Jimmy Green comes up quietly and knocks the sailor chap down, and orders the potman to carry him downstairs and put him into the street.

"Well, after this we had a deal more dancing and fun, but then things grew confused, a kind of fog drove down into the room and made people hard to see. I recollect of getting into a polka with a gal until a couple ran foul of us, and I fell down: and when I was down I felt as if I didn't care to get up, and I think I dropped off asleep. Any way, when I awoke it was night, or leastways dark, and I found all my mates and me a-sitting outside the Dook o' Sussex, some on the pavement, and some on the doorstep. They was all asleep, lovin'ly leaning against each other, and over the way was a policeman quietly standing and watching as if waiting till we should wake up and walk off. I roused the men, and some not being so bad as others, we joined arms, and after a deal of backing and filling, and missing stays and wild sheering, we managed to look up for a straight course to the boarding-house, which we reached without accident, and we then went to bed."

## *A TURNPIKE SAILOR.*

WALKING along a quiet country road, not very far out of London, I spied limping ahead of me the figure of a man, who, even at a distance, presented an exceedingly nautical appearance. He was dressed in an old yellow sou'wester, a pair of trousers—apparently made out of a blanket—considerably too short, and a monkey jacket a great deal too long. He hobbled forward with the aid of a stick, yet his gait was not without a certain spring which made me suspect that there must be times when he would be able to walk very well without the support of a staff. I was pretty sure he would accost me as I passed him, nor was I unwilling that he should do so, since I could not but think that the extremely marine appearance of this man was strong evidence of much varied experience by land if not by sea, and that his conversation, therefore, would not be without interest. He had taken one or two peeps behind him, so as to know that I was coming, and I was not a little pleased by the art with which he seemed to shake himself down in his nautical clothes into a sort of shipwrecked shuffle, a kind of castaway movement of leg and back, as if he had not long been left stranded by the merciless seas, and was now feebly making his way inland in search of a tree to spend the night in.

I was passing him slowly, pretending to take no notice of him, when he exclaimed, "Beg your pardon, master. A pore broke-down seafarin' man 'ud take it kind if you'd let him say a word to you, sir."

I looked at him, and found his appearance rather curious. His hair was very nearly white, and it fell in a fringe under his sou'wester to his shoulders. Yet his face was not that of an old man. Had his hair been dark he might have passed for forty-five or fifty.

"What do you want to say?" I asked.

"Sir, I'm an old and broke-down mariner," he replied, "and I should be thankful to be informed if there's e'er a institooshion in London that takes the like of me in, for as to the work'us, I'd rather lie down and perish in this here road than have it said that old Bill Bunting brought up in the union arter all."

"So your name is Bill Bunting," said I, slackening my pace that his castaway limp might keep him abreast of me; "a very nautical title indeed, and quite in character with your sou'wester."

"Ah," he exclaimed, with a grin, "then you know the name of this contrivance," touching the yellow head-covering; "it's excellent for going aloft in, and for sheltering the ears, but it's not a hat I'd wear ashore," he added, with a sigh like a groan, "if I'd anything else to put on."

"At all events," said I, with a glance at his coat and trousers, "it makes you look like a seafaring man, and that must be a source of great satisfaction to you at this long distance from the ocean on whose bosom you have been so rudely tossed, for I've heard that sailors always leave their hearts behind them at sea when they quit it."

"Ah," he exclaimed, with a dismal shake of the head, "it's a blow to leave the hocean anyways, but it's worse when a man gives up pore and crippled, not worth so

much, s'elp me, as the walley o' half a pint of beer, and without a roof to keep the cold rain-drops off his white hairs. I'm an old and broke-down mariner, and I'd be thankful——”

“How long were you at sea?” said I, cutting him short, for he had dropped his voice into the well-known turnpike whine.

“Years an' years,” he answered, squinting at me out of the corners of his eyes, and evidently trying to make up his mind about me.

“Indeed! years and years?” said I. “And after your long hard life to be reduced to this, eh?”

“Ay, it's terrible indeed, master,” he replied, stumping along with his deliberate limp. “Think o' bein' in want, without a roof for your 'ed or the walley of a drink o' beer in all this here airth arter bein' shipwrecked and starvin' on rafts and cast naked on rocks. I'm an old and broke-down seafarin' man, sir, and if you'd kindly assist——”

“So you've been shipwrecked?” I exclaimed, cutting him short again, and feigning much interest and pity. “And cast naked on rocks? How dreadful! What is your age, pray?”

“Fifty-one, master; fifty-one, the Lard help me.”

“If that's all,” said I, “how is it that you're wearing the hair of a man of eighty?”

He wiped his mouth with the back of a very grimy hand, and said, “It's all the doing of the hocean, sir. There was ne'er a sailor afloat with a blacker head of 'air than I had, but shipwreck altered its colour, and made me feel as old as my 'air looks, and here am I, broke down and crippled, a-followin' this here road in the hopes of its leadin' me to a roof, and if you'll kindly bestow a trifle on a pore——”

"It must have been a terrible shipwreck to change your hair like that," said I, cutting in as before when he fell to his dismal whine. "Where did you sail from?"

He wiped his mouth again, and said, "Yarmouth."

"What! were you a fisherman?"

"No, sir, no; I was a seafarin' man," he replied, smartly striking the ground with his stick as he limped forwards.

"What sort of vessel—a full-rigged ship?"

"I've sarved in so many," he answered, with another dismal shake of the head and a look behind him, "that I don't rightly remember what she might be termed."

"She wasn't a man-of-war, I suppose," said I, "because in that case instead of changing your hair you might have lost a leg or an arm, and have had to sit by the wayside showing a stump and a piece of black canvas explaining the nature of your fearful accident in white letters. No; it's fortunate that you were not a blue-jacket. Was the vessel big or little?"

"Little," he answered, giving me another anxious look. "I'd be thankful, sir, if you'd give me the directions of some institooshion that takes in wore-out seafarin' men, an' if you'd help me with a trifle I'd be very grateful."

"I don't suppose you intend going to sea again?" said I.

"Look at that there jint," he exclaimed, with a flourish of his left hand towards his foot. "Then consider the feebleness of these here arms. No capt'n 'ud take me, glad as I'd be to go."

"But what sort of shipwreck was it that changed your hair?" I inquired.

"Oh, it was a fearful job, master," he said, stopping in order to expectorate, and giving another backward

look, from the peculiarity of which I gathered that if he saw any one more "likely" than myself behind us he would not unthankfully forego the pleasure of my society. "It was done under water, sir."

"Is it possible!" cried I; "and yet you live to tell the story?"

"Yes," said he, gloomily; "I live, but I came up with my 'air whitened;" and, then, in a sort of desperate way, he proceeded, "I was a sailor in a little wessel belonging to Yarmouth. I dunno what she might be termed—my mem'ry's failin' of me, and I've been in so many that there's no recollectin' partiklers."

"How many years at sea, do you say?"

"Years an' years."

I said, "Well, she was a little vessel?"

"Yes, a little wessel. There was me and the captain an' an officer; there was four seafarin' men, besides, and the cook."

"Do you mean a Custom House officer?"

"No, sir, I mean the gent next the capt'n."

"Oh, I know; what you sailors call a mate."

"We sailed out," he continued, not answering me, "and the wind rose and blew us along."

"Where were you going to?"

"That's another matter I don't rightly recall," he replied, "and I wouldn't stoop to give you a false address. As I was a-sayin', the wind rose up and blew us along——"

"What were you carrying in the little vessel? What was your—ah, cargo? that's the word."

"Casks o' werry light provisions," he answered promptly; "likewise oil and cork. We sailed along till we come to the Bay of Biscay. It blew a storm, an' the ship's sails was taken down, and we scudded for



height and forty hours under bare poles. But the sea was so high that we couldn't prevent the water from rolling over us. Ho! the cold was dreadful; we was continuously wet through, and as there was no means of cookin' our food we had to take our meals raw."

"Dreadful!" I exclaimed, "how little people like me who live ashore are able to guess the hardships sailors such as you undergo!"

"Raw, I says," he continued. "I was down in the cabin whilst we was rolling about on waves as high as that tree there. Never was I among more dreadful waves—high as that tree there, I tells yer," stopping to point with his stick, with a look in his face as if he were not quite satisfied with his illustration, and would like to show me something taller; "I was down in the cabin, I says, it bein' my turn to be there, and I was lying in my hammock a listenin' to the sounds of the waves, when I falls asleep, bein' wore out."

"With pumping?" I suggested.

"Yes, with pumpin'," he replied; "but, as I've told yer, pertiklers is not in my line—seafarin' sufferin', combined with destitootion ashore, having sp'ilt my recollection. Well, I falls asleep, and when I woke up it was dark and everything silent. The wessel didn't move, and I says to myself, we've struck upon a desert isle-land, and I've slep' till the night's come on. I gets up to go on deck, but discovered I couldn't get out, the hatches being on and everything as tight as if druv in with nails. Then I steps to a windy in the side of the cabin, and when I looks out what's there to see but water!"

"So you were still afloat?"

"No, no, the wessel was under water, and it wor all green agin the glass."

"And none coming into the cabin?"

"Ne'er a drop. There was no place for it to come in. The hatches had been fastened down by the others, forgettin' I lay sleeping in the cabin : and the wessel had sunk with me in her, and there I was."

"At the bottom of the sea, eh?"

"Well, I thought so, but after a bit I took notice of a sort of floatin'-like feelin' in the wessel, and then I considered that she couldn't be at the bottom ; otherwise that there sensation would be wantin'. Well, I was terrible scared, an' felt creepy and crawly as never you could guess how. I couldn't tell how fur deep she'd sunk, but, thinks I, if she's out o' sight it's the same as if she wur a mile down, an' I says to myself, 'Bill Bunting, you're a dead man.'"

"But why didn't she sink to the bottom?" I inquired, observing him to pause whilst he wiped his mouth as before, with another look behind him.

"Well, it's a bit of nat'ral ph'loserphy. The further you go down in the hocean the harder it is to sink. This 'ere wessel was loaded with light goods, which took to floatin' arter they'd sunk a certain depth, and they kep' the wessel up. S'pose ye takes a cork and ties a copper to it ; then if the copper ain't but a little bit heavier than the cork it'll only sink a certain distance in salt water. There's no mistake about that," he exclaimed glancing at me, as if he thought I should argue the question ; "and that's why it was the wessel didn't go to the bottom. The stuff in her haud had come to a pressure that was ekul to the floatin' of them, and there I was 'anging about two 'undred feet under the hocean's surface, a pore dyin' seafarin' man alone in the dark. Well, I lights a candle and looks about for some grub, and sits down and makes a meal. I likewise breathed as small as I could, for I reckoned if I didn't put myself on

a short allowance o' air I'd soon use up all there were and perish. I'd no notion o' the time. There was liquor enough in the cabin, and when I puts my nose to the windy and sees nothin' but the green water I was tempted to 'toxicate myself and die insensible; but always havin' been an habstemious man stopped me from degradin' of myself as a British sailor, and so I says, 'No, if I die I'll die like a man,' an' all the days I was in that there wessel I never took a drop more than what was good for me. Well, sir," he continued moistening his lips, and settling his voice into a whining tone, and putting on a more defined shipwrecked and castaway hobble, "the time passed, and I eats up all the food that was in the cabin. Then I casts my heye upon the division that separated the cabin from the goods that was in the wessel, and, thinks I, if I breaks down them boards the water may flow in; but it's drown or starve, I says, and with that I takes a hammer that was knocking about and makes a hole, and steps in among the casks. Here I found plenty of biscuit and salt pork, and such food as seafarin' men eats, and I had a good tuck in. This went on for days, I always takin' care to breathe small. The curiousest part about this here adventure was my appetite. A good many pore sailor men sunk under the hocean would soon find themselves becoming impartial to food; but with me it was quite contrary—I never could get enough. I'd go on eatin' and eatin', and still fell faint, as if I wor famished. took no notice of the meat bein' uncooked; I'd knock out the head of a cask o' pork or beef, and keep all on eatin' till I'd wonder how long I'd been at it. I allow it was the want o' good air or enough to live on. Natur' must be satisfied somehows, and if she can't get it in breathin' she'll take it out in provisions."

"How did you manage for light?" I asked. "Had you plenty of candles on board?"

"Why no; I couldn't find more nor 'ud last me a week; arter that I got used to the place by the feel o' things and a sort o' light that came in faint and green through the windies."

"A fearful situation to be in, certainly."

"Ho, no gent belonging to the shore can guess what pore sailors has to go through," he whined, passing his sleeve over his eyes; "and to come to destitootion and starvation arter all." He gave a loud snuffle and wiped his eyes again.

"I suppose you were ultimately saved?" said I.

"I'll tell 'ee how," he replied, in a voice that implied it needed but a very little more to cause him to weep copiously. "I rose the vessel by eatin'!"

"You did what?" I exclaimed.

"I lightened her by the quantity I eat, sir," he exclaimed, making his eyes meet in my face with a singular squint. "Every mouthful I took helped to rise her, and it wur one day arter comin' to the bottom of a cask o' beef, that all at onced daylight broke in, and I was saved. A good many might think this invention, but it's as true as that this here stick is made o' wood. It's just a matter o' nat'ral ph'loserphy. I wanted nothing but time to lighten her, an' I did it by eatin'. I emptied cask arter cask till she riz to the surface of the hocean. She came up full in sight of a fishin' boat. The crew, seein' a vessel floatin' up out o' the bottom of the sea, took to speculatin' a bit, and they puts a boat over, opens the hatches, and finds me, a pore, half-drowned, lonesome seafarin' man. I blinked at the light, for it had growed quite uncommon. The fishermen was a good deal scared, and some of 'em ran as if they'd jump overboard when

I come slowly up out o' the cabin, winkin', through the strength of the sun, as if I was jokin'."

"What was the name of the ocean you were in?" I asked.

"The Bay of Biscay, sir."

"And the fishermen—were they English?"

"Ay, belongin' to Yarmouth."

"Well?"

"Well, they took me to their wessel, an' I told 'em my story, and they shows me a lookin'-glass, and I found that my hair, which was a beautiful oily black afore I sunk, was turned quite white, just as you see it, sir. They put some men into my wessel, and sailed her back to Yarmouth, and sold her there—ay, true as this here stick's made of wood—for one hundred pound sterlin' money; but d'ye think they'd give me a penny of it? I'm a pore, lone, seafarin', shipwreckt man, sir, and if you'd direct me to some institooshion for starvin' sailors, or if you'd kindly assist me with a trifle, I'd be eternally grateful to you, sir."

I gave him sixpence, thinking his story was worth that money, then trudged on my way. The road for half a mile stretched straight in front of me; midway between the end of it and where I left the poor seafaring man stood a little public-house. The distressed seaman remained full in sight until he was fairly abreast of the tavern; I looked back before taking the bend of the road, and this mariner of England had disappeared.

But not for ever. It was but a few days ago that I met him in the neighbourhood of the picturesque village of Acton. He was limping close in the wake of an old lady, whose sole anxiety seemed to be to prevent him from stepping on a waddling pug that she was dragging after her. I conclude, therefore, that his emergence

from the bosom of the deep promises to be regular. Should any one encounter a halting figure, clad in a yellow sou'-wester, fearnaught trousers too short for him, and a monkey coat much too long, with a club nose, a moist eye, a face of fifty-one, and the white hairs of eighty, not to mention a grimy hand and a trick of looking behind, he is respectfully exhorted not to give him alms until, without a moment's hesitation, the mariner can state the name of the vessel he foundered in, her rig, and her port of destination, and can also explain the difference between the binnacle-yard and the main jibboom.

## *JACK ASHORE.*

THERE is no bishop, clergyman, or Bethel preacher in existence who would be more rejoiced than I to know that when sailors come ashore after long voyages it is their custom to repair at once to a savings' bank and deposit the wages they have taken up in it, to limit their drink to pump-water and tea, to wear Sunday clothes on the Sabbath, and take walks after service arm-in-arm with their wives, if they are married men, with the little ones in a row in front neatly rigged out, or with their aunts or mothers, or even grandmothers, if they are bachelors, and have been wise enough to keep to windward of courting. Yet, as a man who has had a taste of ocean life—long spells of it at a time—I cannot help thinking that if there be one class of persons more than another whose land-going diversions merit some little leniency of rebuke, some little moderation of invective, they are sailors. Not, perhaps, your short-passage men the Atlantic, the Baltic, the Mediterranean seafarers, for example, whose absence from home is of brief duration, and who get a run ashore a few days after they have left their English port. I refer to crews who are weeks and months away out of sight of land; ships' companies who man sailing vessels trading, by way of the Horn or the Cape of Good Hope, with Australia and the Indies, and

the West Coast of North and South America, from Valparaiso to San Francisco. For weeks and weeks these men see nothing but one monotonous expanse of sea and sky. They have to endure a hundred hardships of exposure, of fierce weather, of severe labour; they are even when well-off but poorly housed and indifferently fed, and they quench their thirst with bad water, which, in this economic rather than teetotal age, is unflavoured by the smallest drop of spirits; they have no enjoyment outside the rough sailor's pleasure of the yarn, the smoke, the song in a dog-watch when the weather is fine. Who can wonder, when the dockyard gates are reached and the crew paid off, that they should tumble ashore eager for a spell of those land-going diversions of which they have been thinking and talking for months? Of course their well-wishers would rather see them soberly journeying home, or carrying their traps to respectable houses, than diving head foremost, with all the money they have in the world in their pockets, into the coarse and savage festivities which the male and female harpies of the big ports arrange for the foolish rollicking creatures. But look into the sailor's mess-kid, look into his bunk or hammock, follow him out of his gloomy fore-castle into the blinding wet and bitter frost of the ocean gale, go aloft with him, count his pay, and consider that for the money he gets he is for twenty-four hours in every day, from noon to noon, at his owner's and captain's disposal; and then condemn him if you can, for tumbling over the side at the first chance to enjoy himself after his own wild, stupid, childish fashion.

It is all very fine preaching to such men. Their grog is stopped at sea; but that does not make them teetotalers. It compels temperance for the time, but in my opinion it is only a kind of abstinence that increases craving.



People who want to improve Jack's life when ashore must never forget what his life is at sea. But, unhappily, those who are wishful to help him into something higher than the existence he is supposed, and I am sorry to say rightly supposed, to lead when he leaves his ship have not much knowledge of the discipline and discomforts he quits. You cannot turn the sea into rosewater; it will remain salt and bitter; and since that is so, then, in my humble judgment, the way to make Jack a quieter and wiser man on land than he is now is not, under new names, to perpetuate the restraint he is fresh from and sick of, but to purify, as far as possible, the pleasures he wants and will have. Sailors' Homes do not flourish, not because they are not admirable institutions, but because they suggest a discipline which seamen—who have had more than they want of it—are determined to fling overboard when they pick up their money and shoulder their chests or bags. They like the lodging-house because they have an idea they are perfectly free in it. There is nobody to advise; they are never admonished; they are helped to spend their money as fast as they can throw it away; they may fight, sing, get drunk, do what they please; this theory of perfect liberty is heightened by the society of extremely free female companions; and, short as the spell of happiness usually is, it answers exactly to the sailor's notion of a holiday. His argument is that if he may not do what he likes when ashore he may as well be at sea. And he is right. The mistake his philosophy leads him into is his adherence to the old and foul maritime traditions of shore-going pleasure. Education would, no doubt, lift him clear of the mud of his present habits, but sailors are not easily got at by chaplains and teachers; and meanwhile, as marine educational notions are hanging fire, the next best thing is

not to seek to divert the mariner from his resolution to kick up his heels when he comes home after a long absence, but to consider whether the haunts he loves may not be in a measure elevated.

As a sample of Jack's conduct when landed from some months of salt water, the following story, related to me by a sailor, may prove edifying:—

"Jim," he began, "was second mate, and I was carpenter. The vessel was a small barque, and in all we'd been eighteen months away, Callao being our last port. Throughout the voyage me and Jim had been good friends. I don't say he wasn't a trifle jealous of me. Fact is, I was a bit smarter than him, and never gave him a chance. If it was a reef-topsail job, I was always aloft first and out at the weather earring afore Jim was upon the yard. I recall the skipper owing me a grudge; he set me and a boy to rattle down the lee mizzen shrouds when, as you may suppose, it was so slack that I could go swifter in the rigging with my hands. Jim grinned, thinking that was one for Joe—Joe being me. Two able seamen were set to rattle down to wind'ard, and the skipper rated me for not being so fast as they was, but I took no notice, and went on with my job, and when it was over I went up to Jim, and says, 'Why don't you go on grinning? Have you lost the art o' smilin', bully?' It was always a kind o' rivalry betwixt us, but taking it all through it made no difference to our friendship.

"Well, when we arrived at Liverpool, him and me agreed to board at the same house. The charge was fifteen shillings a week, and the cooking up to the hammer. Jim had about £70 to draw; he put it all into his pocket, and came along with me to the boarding-house. It was kept by a middle-aged woman; well I

remember her. She had a face like the shell of a walnut, all wrinkles, and a knob for a nose, and she'd call us sailors 'dear souls,' and was mighty polite, you bet; and she'd take the head of the table like a duchess, and manœuvre with the teapot with her little finger stuck out, all ship-shape and high-lady fashion, make no mistake; and though I've seen her blowing into her tea to cool it, d'ye reckon she'd demean herself by pouring it into the saucer? There wasn't a politer woman in Liverpool than Mrs. Gubbidge, and she knew sailors' natures A 1.

"Well, two days arter we had been ashore, Jim, at dinner-time, says he meant to go for a stroll. Up to that he'd been quiet enough. 'All right,' says I, 'I'm good for the theayter to-night; but there's no walking for this child till after tea.' He goes upstairs and dresses himself, and then steps into the parlour again afore going out to let us see how fine he looks. Thinks I to myself, 'You've not taken all that trouble for nothing, mate,' and I wonders when I see him what sort of gallivanting course he was bound on. He had iled his hair till it shone like brass-work; he'd got a new cap on and new boots, and what with a row of brass buttons down his waistcoat, and the bight of a gold chain there, and a good blue cloth coat and breeches, why, all I can say is, Jim looked as genteel a sailor as ever cleaned himself up for a walk in the streets of Liverpool. Well, when he was gone I took a book, hoisted my legs on a chair, lighted a pipe, and tarned to and smoked and read till I fell asleep. When I woke up it was tea-time. I asked if Jim had come back.

"'No,' says the landlady.

"I had a mind for the theayter, and after tea I went to the room me and Jim shared to give myself

a bit of a polish, and then walks out, it being about seven o'clock, the night closed in, and all the gaslights blazing. I turned into a tobacconist's shop to buy a cigar, and was coming out smoking of it, when who should pass but Jim, in tow of a couple o' gells. I've seen a sight o' female costumes in my time, from nose-rings down to haprons of leaves, but, roast me, if ever I'd come across such a rig as Jim's two ladies carried. Colours! Lor' bless yer! Ye might multiply all the streaks of a rainbow by ten, and then have found a lot wanting. I dropped into their wake, and soon discovered that my shipmate was what's called 'well on'—pretty nigh slued. His legs was buckling up under him as if they was made of rope, ye'd see his head toppling from side to side as though his neck was broke, and every now and again he'd struggle to get his arms clear as if he had a mind to flourish 'em in a song; but the ladies held on to him tight, and away they went lurching from side to side of the pavement, and scattering the people passing along.

"My mind instantly went to work to think how I could rescue that poor, drunken, foolish Jim, and an idea coming into my head I quickens my pace till I steps up close to the three, and sings out, 'Hallo, Jimmy!'

"Hearing his name, he stops and brings the gells to a stand, and says to me in a maudlin way, 'Who are you?'

"'Who am I?' cries I. 'Why, hang it all, Jim, d'ye mean to say you're so drunk that you don't know who it is that's a talking to you? Where are you going?'

"'What's that got to do with you?' he answers fiercely, giving me some middling hard words at the same time.

"'Well,' says I, 'I don't think that's the sort of way to talk to a friend, Jim,' says I. 'I asked you a civil

question, and if you was half a man ye'd answer me civilly.'

"'Half a man!' cries he, hiccuping and talking in a thick voice; 'I'll let you know whether I'm half a man or not.'

"'Oho!' says I, 'is that your game, my lad,' says I. 'If ye think I'm to be scared by the likes of such talk as *that*, it's pretty plain ye've made your voyage with me to no purpose at all.'

"And so saying I chucks myself into a sort of fighting posture just to aggravate him. When he sees this, he flings clear o' the women, and comes lurching and squaring up to me.

"'I'll hammer you,' says I. 'I'll make you sing out afore I've done with you,' I says. 'But not here; there's too many people about. Come along to a quieter place.'

"And I walks a little way, looking behind me and shaking my fist at him, whilst he follows, motioning as if he wanted to knock my head off, and the gells sticking to his skirts. Sometimes I'd let him overtake me, and then I'd square up, and then drop my fists as if I'd changed my mind, singing out, 'No, no, come you along; I must have you in a quieter place, bully, to wind you up properly;' and so bit by bit I decoys him in this way into the street where our boarding-house was situated. The gells [now twigged my game, and laid hold of him, and tried to persuade him to leave me alone and go along with them; but, seeing this, I aggravated him till he was fairly mad. He broke clear of them, and followed arter me till we come to the door of the boarding-house, which I threw open, and then, catching him by the neck, I pitched him headlong in, and shut the door behind us. He was so drunk that when he fell down he didn't attempt to get up, but lay there insensible, snorting at the top of his

voice. The landlady come and looked at him. I knelt down, overhauled his pockets, and found sixty odd sovereigns in them.

“‘Let’s hide this money,’ says I to the landlady; ‘it’ll give him a fright when he wakes up.’

“She consented, so I took the gold away, and his watch and chain, and whatever else of value that I could find, leaving him a few coppers; then helped the landlady to carry him upstairs.

“Well, I went to the theayter, and when I came back Jim was still snoring, and totally unconscious. I turned in and fell asleep. In the morning, it being still dark, I was woke up by my shipmate routing about. He was talking to himself and saying, ‘Where am I? What the blazes has become of me?’

“‘What’s the matter with you?’ says I.

“‘Is that you, Joe?’ he sings out.

“‘Who else?’ says I.

“‘Where am I?’ says he.

“On which I struck a light, and found him standing up in the middle of the room, turning his head about like a fool.

“‘Why, don’t you know where you are, Jim?’ says I.

“‘Why, yes, I see it now,’ he answers. ‘Have I been dreaming?’ And then he puts his hands into his pockets, and feels himself all over, growing more and more agitated, till there he stood, slapping himself like a freezing man in search of his blood; and then he yells out, ‘All my money’s been stole?’

“‘And your watch, too,’ says I; ‘for where’s your chain?’

“He turned dreadfully white, and sat down on the edge of his bed.

“ ‘Here’s a look out,’ he groaned. ‘What’s to do now, Joe ?’

“ ‘Well, I’m going to finish out my night’s rest,’ says I. ‘If you will go out on these here skylarking jaunts you must expect to suffer ;’ and, so saying, I put my head down and pretended to snore.

“ Well, to make a long story short, the landlady and me kept the joke up till after breakfast. We made him fearful miserable with the notion that his money and his watch had been stole, and it was not till he had actually got up with the intention of getting another ship at once—taking any berth he could find, for he believed the few pence I had left in his pocket was all the money he had in the world—that I told him the story and produced his ‘property.’ The lesson did him a world of good. There was no more gallivanting with him arter that.”

This story is not without its significance. “There was no more gallivanting with him arter that.” The fright the fellow had received, I suppose, kept him clear of evil haunts. But how would he pass his time ashore ? How would he kill the tedium of the long evenings ? Sailors, and especially young sailors, are not people to put on slippers and fix themselves in armchairs and read good books till it is time to go to bed. You must not grudge them pleasure ; let them have their dancing place, their music-hall, and so forth ; they want recreation after their long terms of ocean strife, and to talk to them of nothing but Bethels and cravated propriety when the poor fellows come ashore is cruel and absurd. Jack will have his fling, and his best friends are not the people to stop it, but to do their utmost to make his folly a harmless one. It is quite possible to purify his diversions by the location in the parts he frequents of caterers who will provide him with good and honest entertainments,

and to elevate his home-life when ashore by departmental recognition and support of such boarding-house keepers as prove themselves anxious to deal by him fairly. But until some theory of this kind is understood and adopted, the Jims of the nautical world, unless associated with astute friends of the Joe pattern, will continue to be fleeced as fast as they step ashore.



## *SAILORS' HARDSHIPS.*

AT this particular season of the year (Christmas, 1883), when the heavens are grey and the winds are nipping and the earth is white with frost and snow ; when the glow of the crimson fire lies ruddy on wall and ceiling ; when the moaning of the icy blast in the chimney sounds like a voice exhorting one to rightly appraise such homely details as the slipper and the armchair ; and when nothing that one's purse, ample or slender, can purchase but gathers an increase of pleasure-giving power from the presence of sturdy old Winter, it seems not unreasonable to withdraw one's sympathies for a little while from the land and to send them forth to that hard, green, briny ocean upon which poor Mercantile Jack is tossing. For though good-will and friendly wishes may not do him much good—will not, for instance, increase his wages, sweeten his beef, or stop the water from draining into his bunk—yet he surely deserves a kindly thought and a pleasant message ; not less so, indeed, than any other type of a hard-working community in this country, and in my humble opinion rather more. There are many among us who have friends and relations at sea—fathers and husbands, brothers and dear sons ; and shall we not toss down a bumper to them at this time, and whisper a prayer that all may go well with them till

they are at our side again? At no other season of the year, indeed, can the sailor's calling come more home to us than in winter. The north wind is shouting over the housetops; the naked trees are struggling with the gale; the snow is blown into ridges.

But where is the ocean? One must leave one's inland haunts to view it. Ashore nothing responds to the shrieking blast but the echoes of its own wild crying, with a rushing on high of smoke-like clouds and a whirlpool of skeleton leaves here and there. But look seawards now; stand with me upon this iron rock one hundred feet above the white smother on the beach that is rolling its note of thunder for leagues along the shore and send your gaze into the distance. The towering surges shatter themselves into snow, and the wild gale, coming straight out of the North Pole, plunges with a yell into every hissing hollow, and shoots out of the liquid slant, tearing up with its keen teeth a storm of spray. The horizon is thick with vapour. You know it must be whirling along with the velocity of the wind, yet it seems to stay, a hard and ashen wall, and betwixt you and it the scud is driving like the shadows of flying spirits. The cold seems to freeze the tears it wrings from the eyes, and again and again one turns one's back to the spray-damp pouring gale to recover one's sight in order to follow that ship out there which has just oozed out of the distant thickness and is sweeping like a hunted, terrified thing before the screaming wind and roaring seas. It is a sight to watch her rolling and plunging. She is under reefed foresail and lower maintopsail and foretopmast-staysail, and high as you stand yet there are moments when a plunge of her bows and the lift of a green sea with a boiling summit this side of her hides her forecourse, and there is nothing to be seen of that

fabric of twelve hundred tons but a fragment of her star-board quarter and a gleam off her wet mizzenmast and the stretch of her bursting topsail. Well, small wonder that we city and town and village folks talk of our sailors as we might talk of abstractions, and that our sympathies should be such as abstractions are calculated to provoke. "Poor Jack!" You who say that what do you know of him? You make your little song about him, you find that "breeze" rhymes with "seas," and "foam" with "home," you clap in a sweetheart and a reference to grog, and you think that's his life. But upon my word, when I come to reflect how far off the sea is to most of us, and how little we are able to make of it when we get to it, I am amazed that even the few things that are known about the sailor and his calling and hardships should be understood, and that there should exist the kindness and sympathy for him that is really felt. We all say, "Poor Jack!" and we mean it, though we do not quite know why. The truth is the sympathy he merits must touch that inner life of his which you have to go to sea to understand—do the work, eat the bread, drink the water, and take the chances of the seaman, to grasp. The reality is not to be found in books, nor in Acts or Parliament. It is not altogether the gale of wind, nor the cold, nor the overloaded ship.

I remember once being in a North-country dock watching a ship haul out. Some seamen came bundling along for the "pier-head jump" as it is called. It was a bitter cold day, the air full of snow-clouds, the river an iron grey, and a wind that seemed to whistle into one's marrow. I noticed one fellow as he sprang aboard. His naked feet were thrust into shoes full of holes; he wore a pair of dungaree trousers, a shirt, a Scotch cap, and a belt, with a sheath-knife, round his waist. I said to

a person standing by me, "That's a cold rig for this weather."

"Ay, sir," said the man; "and it's the only rig he's got."

"You mean to say," said I, "that he has shipped with no more clothes than what I see on his back."

"I mean to say," exclaimed the man, "that if you was to offer him ten pound he couldn't show you so much as an inch of rag more of clothes than that you see."

"And he has no bedding?"

"Nothing."

Will you tell me it was the seaman's fault? Very possibly. When he was paid off from his last voyage I dare say he took up money enough to liberally furnish a sea chest; but let us imagine him, weary of the harsh restraint and hard work of life aboard ship, jumping ashore, eager for a frolic, and soon getting robbed of every penny in his pocket. Or let us imagine him, if you like, viciously flinging away his sovereigns in criminal excesses, and waking up out of a drugged sleep to find himself half naked, as I saw him. The fact remains that he goes to sea on a January day for a voyage across the Atlantic in a deep ship, dressed in clothes that would be cool wear for the equator. He is a fool—he is brutish—he is whatever one pleases; but still I say "Poor Jack!" for I know what lies before him: the hard board of his bunk with a bit of straw sneaked from the pig, for a mattress; the shuddering climb aloft when the shrouds and ratlines are glazed with ice; the famishing fight of his numbed limbs with the iron-hard sail; the bitter trick at the wheel; the hundred hard, frosty, messing jobs he will be put to by captain and mates, who do not love to see destitute sailors after his pattern forming one of the

ship's company. Talk of the poor ashore! God knows there is misery enough; but I say that the hungriest scarecrow that ever hugged his rags to his heart under a railway arch does not endure the sufferings such a sailor as I am describing passes through from the hour of his embarkation down to the moment when his ship is moored in port. I know what I am writing about, for I have been shipmate with such men; and there is no sailor whose memory is not charged with instances of this kind.

The hardships of the marine calling are so numerous that the mere catalogue of them would fill a thicker book than this. Those, perhaps, which are most felt are the least understood ashore. The water-logged ship, fire at sea, stranding in a gale of wind, famine following extraordinary delay, such and other disasters properly belong to the catalogue; but though they may be attended with unspeakable horrors, they are not of a kind that seamen will growl over. What no man could help Jack will accept as a professional misfortune, an inevitable incident of the calling. These are the outward and tragical circumstances, understood to a certain extent by landmen, because they have been written about and form the chronicles of the deep, as being circumstances indeed which can be related without any special acquaintance with the vocation. The hardships which in their sum make the sailor's life the severest discipline in the world lie between the rails and form a list from which you may exclude the tragedies. They are preventible misfortunes; they are due to meanness, to rapacity, to cold-blooded indifference to human life, to bullying and "work-up" masters and mates. To these must be added the natural severities of the life aggravated and multiplied by the causes just named. Steam, perhaps, abridges the list

There is less work aloft; the voyages are short; the fore-castles are less defective; the provisions are less disgusting. Yet steam has done Jack some evil turns. I shall never forget watching what is termed a "well-deck" ship steaming out of a dock. Amidships the only thing that looked to stand out of the water was her bulwarks. To realize the full meaning of that ejaculation of "poor Jack!" think of him aboard that horrible well-deck steamer hove to in a gale of wind. But it is impossible; the imagination has its limits; you must ship in her as a sailor to understand it. It is idle to talk of the over-raking seas, of tons of water rolling over the fore-castle, of the suffocation below, of the drowning on deck, of the afflicting and distracting motion of the wallowing metal mass. Mere words of this sort convey nothing, even to those who have passed a vessel of the kind in a storm, and watched her. Can you wonder that at such a time the sailor, wet through to the skin, dodging the thunderous seas, and holding on for dear life, should call a few of his emphatic sea blessings down upon the head of the owner as he thinks of him safe and snug ashore, and possibly indifferent as to whether the insured vessel sinks or swims?

Another hardship the landsman might find it difficult to understand is the weak-handed crew. There is no seaman but knows that, on the whole, the under-manned vessel goes in greater peril than the over-loaded vessel. So far as this is a sailor's hardship it is not perhaps felt so severely in steamers as in sailing ships, because the kind of work that has to be done in steamers makes but small demands upon able and ordinary seamen and apprentices. Nevertheless, one has only to stand and count the number of sailing craft that pass through the Gulls for instance, or start from and arrive in the Mersey,

to understand that there is quite enough of vessels which owe nothing to steam for propulsion still in existence to make under-manning a bitter grievance among sailors. The change that has come over the mercantile marine in this respect of late years is one of the standing amazements of old mariners. Time was when a thousand-ton ship would carry hands enough to furl the topgallant sails and courses and close-reef all three topsails at once. The introduction of the double topsail yards—an American idea—was said to have made owners suppose that the invention diminished labour, and that, consequently, fewer hands than formerly would suffice to work the ship. But ships' complements have been growing smaller and smaller since the double topsail yards came into use; and now one of the hardships of the sailor is that he finds himself aboard a ship mustering a company scarce sufficient in number to stow an upper topsail in a gale of wind. It is bad enough to find yourself one of a crew weak-handed in consequence of men falling sick; yet a good sailor will not grumble at that, because he knows that the fault is not the owner's or captain's. But it is quite another matter when a man finds himself aboard a big sailing ship one of a company so numerically deficient that twenty or thirty years ago they would not have been considered enough to furnish out a single watch. Landsmen toasting their toes over roaring fires, with good beds to go to, the whole night to sleep through, and a hearty breakfast to rise to, will not be presumed to know much about such a job as reefing topsails in a howling night full of sleet and hail, the wind coming hard enough to pin a man to the rigging, the sea breaking furiously over the ship, and the sky so black that every rope has to be groped for, whilst a hand that should slip off the foot-rope on the yard would not be missed by the

fellow at his side. But landsmen may guess, anyhow, that the labour even to a large complement of men is severe, and that it is extremely uncomfortable to be startled out of one's sleep by a roar of "All hands" from the deck; and to bundle up, half dressed, in a hurry, to find a gale of wind blowing, the night pale with whirling snow, the ship with her lee rail under water, the yards on the caps and the sails shaking out their thunder, and the foam in the scuppers up to a man's waist. To a strong-handed crew work of this kind is harsh and toilsome enough, even when three top-sail yards can be manned at once, and there are hands to spare for the light sails above them and out on the jibbooms; but when a crew is reduced to a working strength not one-third equal to the fair demands of the ship; when the same duties which were formerly discharged by a forecastle full of good seamen are put upon a meagre company who probably do not number half a dozen really smart sailors among them, then Jack is encountered by one of the worst of those hardships of which the land-going public know absolutely nothing whatever. He alone understands the exhausting nature of the work. He alone can appreciate all that is meant by speaking of taking in one sail at a time in a gale of wind, reefing and stowing, unbending and bending, sending down yards and the like, with a watch on deck that comes round every four hours and a spell at the wheel that lasts for two hours, and a wet black forecastle to go to at the end of it all; while, as for breakfast—after labouring through the night as no mortal landsman in this wide world labours through the day—he gets a hook-pot of yellow water and tea-leaves and a handful of bits of ship's bread.

No; the sailor's life is not a very jolly one. When-



ever I hear of hardships ashore I creep, in fancy, into the forecastle of a coaster on a December night in a gale of wind in the North Sea, and then I find land-going misery grows a little bit faint. Figure, for instance, a very heavy sea on, and your ship with a strong list to port. The cargo is coal; it has shifted, and Jack must bear a hand and tumble below and trim it, or his hooker will in a very short time contribute to the green navies which lie at the bottom of the ocean in thousands. Who amongst us ashore, who are not nautical folk, think of such a hardship as this? who has ever made a song about it? who has ever put it into a romance of the deep? This shifting business is one of the sailor's pleasant secrets; it is a matter that happens inside the rails; to know all about it you must sign articles for the forecastle of a steamer, whose shifting boards are worthless, whose cargo is infamously stowed, and then drive away into a gale of wind. Jack, of course, knows nothing about the interior of the hold; he comes aboard at the last moment, and is much too busy—not to say too drunk—to lift up the hatches and peep down and note how vilely the stevedore has done his work. But that useless or rascally stevedore has the power to coin a tremendous hardship for the sailor out of the seas of a stormy ocean; and his malignant ability is illustrated one day, when a rumbling sound is heard below, and the vessel lies over and refuses to answer her helm and falls into the trough of the billows, to the destruction of her deck equipment and the lives of such of the men as lack the genius to hold on. Jack's list of little-understood hardships offers nothing severer in its way than this. One reads of a crew having to jettison or trim their cargo in order to get the ship to stand upright; but there is really nothing in language, nothing in the paint-brush, nothing in mortal device

short of the fact itself, to bring home the reality of the hold of a heavily-listed ship tossing furiously upon the high seas of a great ocean, portions of the massive cargo rushing from side to side, the interior full of the distracting noise of heavy objects furiously dashed about, and of the hooting of the gale and the thunder of the surges. Into this frightful interior the sailor has to descend to lighten the ship or to restore her to an even keel, or else to go down to the bottom with her. Is this a small grievance—not the terrible, dangerous labour only, but all the mental anxiety and distress that a ship in a situation of extreme danger excites? Yet its deplorable recurrence makes it almost as common in its way as the hardship of the cask of bad pork, the hardship of the leaking forecastle, the hardship of the weak-handed crew, of the deep ship, of the ill-built ship, of the ill-found ship. We cannot err, perhaps, by now and again casting our glances seawards and endeavouring to take a correct view of the hard, savage, and bitter calling which the endurance and courage of the English sailor has made noble. This is the season of kind wishes; and Jack perhaps could hardly expect a heartier proof of landsmen's good-will than evidence of their disposition to clear their minds of cant respecting the sea-life, and to make themselves acquainted with some of the mariner's seldom-mentioned and least understood hardships.

## *A SALT-WATER CURE.*

“I’LL tell you a bit of a joke,” said a master mariner to me. “I dare say you’ll find a laugh in it, and a good grin, you know, does us all good now and again, specially those that it’s my fancy to call liverish. There was a shipowner I knew and was employed by—a very little chap, with a bright eye and the behaviour of a bird; he’d seem to hop when he came at you, and there was a kind of pecking motion about him when he shook hands with you that made one think of a London sparrow, which to my mind is the most restless bird in the world. Well, this little man had bought a steamer, which was about ten years old. Anyway, he held a good many shares in her. Money had been spent in repairs and alterations, and as the shipowner didn’t know much about hulls and engines he gave the job of overseeing her whilst in the workmen’s hands to an engineering chap whom he hired for—well, I can’t tell you what; but anyhow he received good money for looking after the vessel. The shipowner, who for short I’ll call Mr. Smith, had got a name for overloading, though whenever the charge was made against him even in the mildest sort of hint you could imagine, his virtuous indignation was something proper for a stage play. It wasn’t indignation of the ordinary kind—what might be called quiet, respectable indignation; but a thundering tall passion—tall at least for so

little a chap; and always the first thing he wanted to know was if any one supposed he didn't look upon the sailor's life as a holy thing, something sacred, to be treated with reverence; not, indeed, merely because it belonged to a sailor, but because it was owned by a fellow-creature; and could any one dream that he, having such views of human life, could lay hands upon it as if he were a twopenny cut-throat? Yet that must be the inference, he'd say, if he was believed capable of sending ships to sea in such a condition as to be fit only to drown those who sailed in them. Oh, for shame! for shame! Such accusations degraded not them as they were levelled at, but them as were low and base enough to conceive them. Yes; this little man's indignation was something remarkable indeed. Fact is, not being built on so much as an inch of conscience, it had to be shored up, and scaffolded, and supported by so much talk and flourishing of the arms and the like that it came to look a worked-up contrivance, and therefore an unusual kind of indignation.

"Well, he says to me one day, 'Captain, I feel rather stale for the want of a change of air, and I've a good mind to take a voyage with you, if only to prove to those who are always charging us shipowners with sacrificing human life that one of that body anyhow isn't afraid to trust himself aboard just the very sort of cargo boat that's regarded as fatal to sailors. Mind,' says he, 'I don't mean to say that if it wasn't because I feel virtuously indignant that I wouldn't rather take the journey in a passenger vessel; nor would it be any argument for people to say that if my boat is safe for you it's safe for me, because you're paid to undergo risks and all that sort of thing, don't you know; and if you're drowned, why, it's reasonable, because drowning's

a part of your calling, as being stabbed or shot is part of a soldier's; whereas my drowning would be outside the laws of necessity, since the calling I pursue has got no business to involve any chance of that kind. Nevertheless,' says he, 'as I feel stale and want a change, I'll go with you, and the voyage, I trust, will put an end for ever to all remarks about my sending sailors away in ships I wouldn't be towed out of sight of land aboard of.'

"Well, this struck me as showing a kind of conscience and a trifle of spirit too, for though men of the Smith kind talk big about the safety of their ships and write miles of letters to the shipping papers, and prove that nothing could be securer than their vessels, and that the outcry about overloading is mere platform sentiment meant to catch the public ear, you never hear of them quitting dry land—especially in the winter months—to find out for themselves whether their discs are really too high, and what an overloaded craft's like in a gale of wind. So that when Mr. Smith stated his intention, I began to think better of him, though of course I kept this to myself, for you see my situation made it necessary that he should suppose I never did think anything of him but what was first-class; I say I began to think better of him, more particularly when I found out that the stevedore he employed was to load the ship as usual that is, without much regard to the captain's orders, meaning mine; for, knowing Mr. Smith of old, I now saw that we should quit dock in the regular Smith fashion—I mean pretty well awash. Our cargo was steel rails. It don't matter here whether we sailed from a west or east port, and where we were bound to. In all it would be a six weeks' voyage, with a touch of the sun perhaps in the tail of it, though there was some cold to be gone through first.

"We got away by a night tide. Whether we should have been stopped had it been daylight and the Board of Trade official on the look-out, or leastways capable of seeing, I can't say, bearing in mind as I do the vessels they'll let pass, mainly because, in spite of the rules and figures given them, they've little more than their judgment to go by; and there's not much judgment to be hired for a small salary, and find yourself and look respectable. But to revert to the steamer. We got away, with Mr. Smith in bed with three glasses of hollands tucked away under his little waistcoat to make him sleep, and the white water streaming along so close aboard that if it hadn't been for the height of the bulwarks there was nothing to stop a man from leaning over and washing his hands in it. One saw the ship's condition when the dawn came; it was more noticeable at sea than when she lay under the cranes ready for hauling out. But at the first going off it was all fine weather; a pleasant following breeze and a trifle of swell. Little Mr. Smith found it very comfortable and nice.

"'Nothing like ocean air for staleness,' says he.

"'You're right, sir,' says I.

"'Only think,' says he, 'how this voyage of mine 'll shut up So-and-so,' naming some shipping parties with a reputation for piety who were among those that would talk about little Smith doing the merchant service interests injury by overloading too barefacedly. 'They'll never be able to mention my name without blushing over the lies they've told about me when they hear how I spent some weeks aboard one of my own boats, freighted with rails, too, and the Bay of Biscay to cross, and the month November—eh, captain? I hope it'll be fine, though. We're pretty deep,' said he, with a squint at the water.

"I should like to have answered by 'about two foot at least too deep, and by about four foot as freeboards would have been calculated fifty years ago;' but I had my situation to keep, and made up my mind to hold my tongue. Well, it *did* keep fine for hard upon a week, and little Smith was in high feather. He ate well and slept well, and smoked 'big cigars on deck, wrapped up in a coat with fur round the collar, and properly went in for enjoying himself. Often he'd say to me in the hearing of the mates. 'Is there e'er a gentleman's yacht with a smother and pleasanter motion than this ship has? To be sure it's never been what young ladies would call rough; but there have been seas and swells on enough to prove her, and if there's one thing more than another that this voyage is going to do for me it's this—it 'll make me practically understand the nonsense that's talked by the Board of Trade people and others about overloading. This boat would be considered very deep indeed, I've no doubt, by those humbugging theorists who've got nothing to lose by forcing a load-line upon owners that's about equal to thirty-three and a third discount of their capital; but feel her as she slides over this swell,' says he, taking his cigar out of his mouth and dropping his head on one side like a bird lost in thought, 'what could be more buoyant? Why, it's positively balloon-like! No cork could dance more lightly.'

"But it was easy to see that all through this here jaw there ran a prayer for a continuance of fine weather. He wanted to be able to get home and tell everybody that he'd made a voyage in one of his boats that had such and such a freeboard, and that there he was, alive and hearty, spite of the Bay of Biscay, to prove by his turning up again safe and sound, that freeboard had

nothing whatever to do with saving sailors' lives, but that it was invented merely for the purpose of diminishing owners' profits.

"Well, if he did pray he wasn't listened to, for when we were eight days out there came a change. A real change I reckoned it was to be, not only by what the mercury indicated, but by the look of the sky. We were well to the south'ard, and little Smith had mounted a white billycock and light pantaloons; but with the change it drew up so cold that it was like Channel weather again. It come on first without much wind, but a heavy swell right athwart our course. We dipped our sides into it till the rails would be flush. It was a wonder to see the vessel lift. Lord knows what laws were governing us, but it seemed to me a sort of cap-sizal of all science to find the old boat erecting her funnel again in the tremendous hollow, and then, like a fly mounting a wall, sliding up the next slant that looked clean over us with its head as yellow as the flame of oil from the sickly glint of the sun that it brought along. Little Smith crept up on to the bridge holding on like the bear on the branch when old Crusoe's man Friday made him jump. He'd given up smoking, and the ash of his cigar might be thought to have got mixed up in his complexion.

" 'This is rather heavy work,' says he, 'isn't it? Gad, captain, I say, I hope the cargo won't shift, hang it!'

"I had no mind to give him any comfort, so I says, 'It'll be a bad job if it does. There's no handling steel rails sliding about like battering rams.'

" 'But they ought to be stowed so that they couldn't shift,' says he.

" 'Yes, sir,' says I. 'That's a reflection that occurs to



us all who go to sea for a living when shifting happens or threatens to take place.'

"'What would be the effect,' says he, 'if the cargo shifted?'

"'Why,' I answered, 'a heavy list that would bring the sea aboard in tons, fill the engine-room, and sink us to the bottom.'

"'Well, confound me if I like it,' says he, watching the swell, first on one side then on t'other, with his eyes quite bright with nervousness. 'Anything behind this, d'ye think?' says he, staring up.

"'Yes, sir,' says I; 'a heavy gale of wind.'

"'You've taken every precaution, I hope,' says he.

"'Why,' says I, laughing, 'there's no precaution to take that I know of except to live it out. All's as secure as the builders'll let us make it, and the stevedore's responsible for the stowage, you know, sir.'

"He said nothing, but stood watching the swell shrinking away like from the rail he clutched whenever the lurch of the vessel was unusually severe. Mind, sir, I'll not deny that it was fearfully trying. The labouring of the boat was terrible, and the trysails helped her no more than a lady's fan would. Meanwhile it was steadily breezing up. A thickness came over the sky, with a kind of yellow scud, that gave way in time to a brown vapour, which made the forenoon as dark as the evening, and by [this time it was blowing half a gale of wind. The swell went down somewhat as though the weight of the breeze flattened it; but a sea got up in its place, running at right angles with the swell, and causing as vicious a tumble as ever you saw. Well, little Smith got worse with the weather. The sea had been smooth and the days pleasant so long that he had, in a manner of speaking, counted upon things lasting [as they were till

the voyage was over ; and now that a change had come, sudden, heavy, and full of threatening, it frightened him. Of course he knew all about how overloaded vessels behave in stormy seas, and you may guess he was secretly repenting the bravado, which he wanted to represent as conscience, that had sent him deep into the Atlantic in November, there to be taught not only to know, but to feel, how the ill-used, neglected, and imperilled sailor suffers. Before it came on dark that afternoon—with the evening, I mean, for there was a dusk on the sea all day—it was blowing a living gale. If swell there were, it was all one now with the seas. They rolled along in mountains of blackish-green water fringed with froth ; the heavy clouds like rolls of smoke, which seemed to rise out of the distant hollows, gave them an evil, swelling, dangerous appearance, and our low decks made them look twice the height they really were. I got the steamer head to sea, and one saw how well she would have managed had a proper buoyancy been left in her, but she could do nothing with the tremendous dead weight in her. It was scaring enough to stand on the bridge and watch both ends of her chopping up and down. Her bows would fly aloft and the roaring white water would be raging round her quarters and stern, then plunge would go her head out of sight, disappearing in boiling froth, whilst before she could struggle out of it lump would come a body of green water weighing tons and tons over the rail, crashing along the decks, lifting the ropes off the pins, and dashing every movable object along with it, till from the bridge the steamer would look to be clean under water.

“ I’ve said little Smith was scared—he was more than that. He hung on to the bridge, refusing to go below. I advised him to shelter himself from the cold and the

wet—for squall after squall was blowing down and the fury of the gale slung the spray along like arrows, but he shrieked out, 'No.' The feel of the cabin was too much for him; on deck he could see what was happening; he wasn't going to be drowned like a rat in a trap. I had enough to think of without troubling myself with his fears; though whenever he asked me if there was a chance of my bringing the vessel through this job I'd answer as dismally as the hurricane would let me, and with as long a face as I could draw, that if it wasn't for her being overloaded there'd be every chance, but what was to be hoped for by men aboard a vessel that couldn't lift the contents of her hold to the top of the seas? The longest and most valuable experiences a ship-master ever had couldn't serve him in a ship whose loading made her more unseaworthy than were she waterlogged and floating on her own cargo.

"'Of course,' says I, 'I'll do my best for the sake of our lives; but it's hard,' says I, 'if men go to the bottom that the stevedore, who's responsible for our destruction, isn't with us.'

"There was no comfort in this language, and I didn't mean that it should have any. He'd got a red shawl tied round his head to keep his hat on and his ears warm; and out of it stared his little face—a sight to see! white as a ghost's, and his eyes goggled at the mountains of water and brightened up into a sort of lunatic expression whenever a sea rolled aboard. At midnight it was blowing fit to prize the ship out of the ocean. Suddenly the engines stopped, and it was found that the piston rod of the low pressure cylinder had become bent and the piston itself jammed. The steamer fell off. I sung out for the cable to be paid overboard that it might bring her head to sea, but whilst this was doing she

shipped a hundred ton of water that smashed the wheel-house, stove in the chart-room, gutted and destroyed the lamp-room, and started the water-tight iron bulkheads betwixt the bunkers and the main deck, besides lifting the bridge deck some inches. Luckily, my engineer was a smart fellow, and by disconnecting the high and low pressure cylinders he got the former to work, but not a moment too soon, for another sea had been shipped that tore away the tarpaulin from number two hatchway and swept down a couple of ventilators, which the men had to plug at the risk of their lives, one man getting his collar-bone broken whilst at the job. Well, I'll not detain you with more particulars respecting that night. I never was in worse weather, and you've only got to back that with the thought of our overloaded steamer to form a pretty good idea of what we went through. Till two o'clock in the morning did little Mr. Smith remain on the bridge, and then seeing he was like to freeze to death—for he was past speaking—I laid hold of him and got him below, where, calling to the steward for a bottle of brandy, that he might put some life into himself, he kept all on drinking till he tumbled off his chair, in which condition he was found by the steward, who pulled off his boots and collar and stowed him away in his bunk.

“The gale broke next forenoon, though the dawn showed us the steamer as wrecked-looking as if she'd been ashore all night, and, the sea going down, we proceeded on our voyage. We fetched our port all right, but do you think Mr. Smith would come back with us? He pretended to find a letter awaiting him demanding his immediate return, which, of course, obliged him to take passage in one of the regular passenger boats trading between that place and London. It was a good

excuse, and I dare say served his turn with his friends at home. But I have reason to believe he talked very little about his journey in his own vessel. Indeed, my notion is that if he hadn't bragged about his intention before starting he'd have kept the whole matter a secret. One consequence, however, followed. When the steamer returned home he had the disc lowered. He never mentioned the subject to me, never referred to his voyage, but just quietly did what I'm saying. I know it, for I took command of the vessel again, though only for that trip; and when we hauled out it was with six inches more height of side than we'd before gone to sea with, and even at that the lower edge of the mark was barely awash. It was a rough way for a man to cure his own propensity, and whether it was lasting I can't say, for I've not met nor heard of him for a long time; but it's certain he made my command of his vessel on the second occasion I took her to sea as agreeable as I could wish; and, though we met with a deal of dirty weather the steamer's behaviour was excellent. It's a treatment for overloading, sir, that might be recommended with advantage to patients; the medicine's not agreeable, but it's strong, and its action sure. If an Act of Parliament could be passed to compel a certain class of owners—men after little Smith's pattern—to make so many voyages every year in their own boats, the Board of Trade would find no trouble in obtaining safe heights of side for seamen."

## THE "VICTORY" \*

I STOOD looking at her from the shore when the colouring of the atmosphere was just such as I should choose if I were a painter, to put into a picture of the old line-of-battle ship. There was scarcely a breath of air to be felt, and in the north-west there was a heavy rain-squall working slowly, almost imperceptibly, up towards the harbour. It was a dense stretch of slate-coloured vapour, and the fast-westerling sun was hidden behind it. Where there was an opening of dusty blue to the right of Portsmouth Hill you saw the rain falling in perpendicular smoke-coloured lines. But after a little the tail of the cloud crept off the face of the sun, which came out in an arch of wet, red light, throwing a faint crimson upon the rain that was falling in a deluge upon the hills when the streets of Portsea and Portsmouth were still dry; and the trickle of the blurred reflection in the water appeared from where I stood to float up to the stern of the *Victory* till it might have passed for a wake of fire running away from under her many-windowed stern.

That was the atmosphere to see the old sea-queen in. She loomed up majestically on the gleam of the still water which the squall had not yet touched, though its shadow was upon it, her white streaks coming out sharp as ivory, and a dazzle of crimson lustre wherever there

was glass to face the sun ; and though, to be sure, the eye drooped with disappointment, with a sense of lamentable unfitness, from the monkey-spars which seemed all the smaller from the topgallant-masts being housed, yet the hull of the old ship stood up, a grand impressive object, in that light, and I remained looking at her till the sun was smothered up in the vapour of the squall, and a heavy splash of rain on the top of my nose warned me to fling sentiment overboard for a spell, and take to my heels.

Next morning was fine, with a pretty little wind abroad. Very early I hailed a waterman, and was rowed over to the *Victory*. Outside she looks wonderfully well preserved, though I hear that she is bepatched with canvas, and very diligently and largely doctored in that and other ways. Still she is the ship that flew Admiral Nelson's flag in the Battle of Trafalgar. She is not like a church which people tell you is a thousand years old, but which fifty years ago was struck by lightning, and was new-roofed and new-spired, and afterwards fresh paved, and then had its south and east walls pulled down and rebuilt, till nothing remains of the thousand-year old church but about two-thirds of the original north wall. The *Victory* is to-day very nearly the same ship she was in 1805—that is, the hull of her ; internally, she has been altered to a degree most ill-advised, having regard to her value as a relic. But as you are rowed along her side and pass under her counter, and look up at the massive timbers, you feel, after deducting the scuttles which the modern hand has cut in the sides for ventilating the deck where the cockpit is, that this is the veritable line-of-battle ship upon which Nelson was wounded to death, and in whose gloomy hold he died.

I mounted the starboard gangway ladder, but my

reverential enthusiasm was somewhat damped for the moment by a very polite marine pointing to a framed notice and requesting me to read that before I went any further. I found I was cautioned, in severe, court-martial-like words, not to dream of feeing the man who showed me over the ship, under pain of causing the person so fee'd to be very seriously punished. I was thinking of Lord Nelson, not of fees ; and to be bothered with such matter-of-fact commercial hints and threats and conjurations when in the very act, as I may say, of kneeling at the shrine whither the Portsea waterman over the side had brought me, a pilgrim, partook of something of the nature of a blow.

"Well," said I to the marine, "I am very sorry I am not allowed to reward you for your trouble in showing me over this ship ; and I can only hope that those who have the job of acting the part of guides or beef-eaters in this venerable hooker are allowed a fair whack of the contents of that box yonder, to which I find I am desired to contribute. Meanwhile let us fire away."

We climbed on to the upper deck, and I stood for some moments, hat in hand, looking down on the brass plate upon it, with feelings in me I cannot hope to express. Hundreds and thousands know what that brass plate signifies ; but to read the inscription upon it is to bring up the whole picture of that breathless, thrilling time. The deck is wonderfully white now indeed ; the guns which once lined the bulwarks are gone ; you survey a broad surface of well-kept planking ; there is nothing to suggest the tremendous conflict but that square of brass upon the deck ; but, having read the words on it, it is impossible to run the eye forward without thinking of the shambles those massive bulwarks walled, the heaps of dead and dying, the crowds



of half-naked men, black with gunpowder, wrestling at the guns, the small-arms men with the flint muskets at their shoulders, the storm of powder smoke hanging among and over the vessels, with the glancing of fire upon it and the roar of artillery slinging through it.

But all under the poop is gutted. Where cabins stood is now clear space. It is refreshing to find the old hammock hooks below. Upon these irons Nelson's pig-tailed seamen hung, and they are genuine remains. The cockpit is narrowed and deformed by bulkheads. The sacred spot where Nelson died is now a cabin with a scuttle. They hold courts-martial on board this ship, and use her in that way; but I suppose hundreds must have felt that such a relic as this ought to have been left intact, and put aside, so to speak, for inspection only—I mean for the inspection of the nation to which she belongs—and, whilst her timbers could be made to keep together, preserved as religiously as the Crown jewels in the Tower, or the monuments in Westminster Abbey. I think it must affect any Englishman with a sense of desecration to find sleeping berths built up in the cockpit where Nelson and his heroes breathed their last, to find the ship gutted of nearly everything that would add colour and life to her as a memorial, with only a few of the original guns preserved, and two or three muskets. The truth is, officials get so used to seeing objects which the multitude regard as sacred for the memory of the patriotism and heroism they help to perpetuate, that they lose their reverence, and deal with them as common things without sentimental interest. No one, I suppose, ought to object to the *Bellerophon* being converted into a laundry; but assuredly Nelson's ship, our most glorious hero's deathbed, ought to have been handled with religious scrupulosity. The only

visit I have ever made to her leaves me with the impression that she has been treated with very little reverence.

I was standing in the low-pitched cockpit where Nelson died, when the *Duke of Wellington*, a short distance off, began to bang away in honour of the Lords of the Admiralty, who had arrived at Portsea. The guns, perhaps out of regard for the numberless adjacent windows, were not apparently very heavy pieces of ordnance; nevertheless, they made plenty of noise, and the thunder of them penetrating to that cockpit gave such colour to my thoughts that it was enough to make me fancy that they were still pounding away on deck; that, instead of being in Portsmouth Harbour, I was in the Bay of Cadiz with the *Bucentaure* and the *San-tissima Trinidad*, and the *Redoubtable* plying us on either hand and astern.

I followed my polite marine on deck, thinking as I went up the ladders that there was a wonderful suggestion of stern, practical seamanship in the appearance of the massive beams, the old brake pumps, and whatever else the despoiling hand of time or the "improver" had left of the ship, till I gained her poop, where I was left alone, and where I stood gazing round me.

Past Blockhouse Fort, I could see the Reserve Squadron lying, a number of solid black shapes, with yellow funnels, and masts with yards braced to a hair, and ram-shaped bows, at anchor. The gleam of a yacht's sails hovered amongst them. Beyond was the greenish coast of the Isle of Wight, dim in the haze. There was a fine delight of contrast in looking at those ironclads from the poop of the *Victory*. I wondered what Lord Nelson would have thought of them. What comments would he have passed on the difference between manœuvring with

a vast spread of canvas, and with telegraphic notices to the engineers in the engine-room? The scene was a very gay one. It was flood tide, a breeze of wind blowing, and the stern of the *Victory* was swung up harbour. On my right was Gosport, with a bright, clean look in its waterside houses, a crowd of yachts in the foreground, and the victualling yard beyond; and, seawards, a long line of shore trending to the left till it terminated in Blockhouse Fort, whilst this side of it lay the old *St. Vincent*, whose tall checkered sides were a noble fore-piece, I thought, for the ironclads away past the fort upon the blue waters of Spithead. On the left was a bit of Portsmouth town standing out in a lump of houses, and Portsea opening into the Hard,—a busy scene of pier, railways, ferries, and captains and lieutenants and all sorts of naval men coming and going in white boats and blue boats and black boats, and Jack holding on with his boat-hook, with a burnt face and arm covered with queer devices, bawling to the steam-pinnaces to mind their eye and not stave him; whilst past the line of dockyard was the green Portsdown hill, with a fissure of chalk glistening in the sun, and a glimpse not far off of the hull of what my boatman called the *Billyruffian*, her decks adorned with a number of objects which looked exceedingly like gallows, but which I was told were used for drying linen; the *Hannibal* beyond; and in the distance the little *George*, the sailing yacht in which King George III. was wont to take his pleasure, though I was told that the only use it is now put to is for furnishing the crew of her Majesty's yacht with an asylum when that vessel is laid up.

It is of Nelson, and Nelson only, that a man is likely to think when standing on the deck of the *Victory*. The ironclads at Spithead, with the *Enchantress*

steaming among them, and many a handsome yacht lazily sauntering by under small canvas, made a fine show: no one need doubt that; they looked to be fully sparred and filled the eye well, though, to be sure, it does not take long to admire as many of these iron ships as can be brought together, for they are as alike in their way as the old liners were, with little more than a variation of the number of funnels, and one being brig-rigged, and another barque-rigged, and so on.

But on the deck of the *Victory* one's eye turns from such ships as the *Lord Warden*, and the *Shannon*, and the *Hector*, and the *Penelope* to the group of Portsmouth houses past which is the spot where Lord Nelson embarked for Trafalgar Bay. At the back of the old George Inn—now the George Hotel—runs Penney Street, and if you walk through the High Street entrance of the hotel you will find your way to the stables through which the great admiral was forced to pass, when the hour came for him to embark, in order to escape the dense masses of people who had congregated in front of the house to cheer him and to shower blessings upon his revered head. I had inspected the old hotel and my mind was full of it as I stood looking landwards from the *Victory's* poop. The old gates which they had to close to prevent the people from crowding into the house are still in their place. No. 15, they say, was the bedroom he slept in. The dead wall of a house blocks the prospect now, but when Nelson slept in that room the view was clear, and one may conceive him standing at the little window and peering with his one eye at the stretch of dim blue water beyond Southsea Common. Just opposite the bedroom is his sitting-room, now divided by a bulkhead—a fine long room—where he transacted his official business. I do not envy

the Englishman who could enter this old hotel, see the coffee-room in which our great admiral took his last meal on British soil, the bedroom in which he took his last night's rest, without being deeply moved. The crowd waiting for a sight of their beloved hero outside heard presently that he had gone out by the stables, down Penney Street, and on by Governor's Green, and so to Southsea Common, and gave chase, and came up with him when he was in his boat ; and, as we all know, they waded after him breast-high into the water to touch his hand and receive his farewell smile. These are fitting thoughts for a man standing aboard the *Victory*, and I am afraid my fancies were more in the cockpit under my feet and in the old house up the High Street than out at Spithead, where the coastguards were being inspected by "my lords," and where my lords were pronouncing everything to be in first-class order and "up to the knocker," as poor mercantile Jack says.

The old Hard at Portsea is almost abreast of the *Victory*, and from her decks you can see the shops and hotels there, though the railway extension to the dockyard utterly ruins the picture from the water. Marryat has done wonders for Portsmouth, and, after Nelson, one thinks next of that fine old genius with his *Simples* and *Easys*. I slept at "the Nut," as Marryat's midshipmen called the old house, making slang out of even so respectable a sign as the Keppel's Head ; and to look out of the top windows of that building, and see the *Victory* and the *St. Vincent*, and the *Duke of Wellington*, is enough to make one think that we are at war with France again, and by going downstairs one will find old chaps with pigtailed and wooden legs tossing off caulkers of brandy at the bar. The old "Blue Postesses," where the midshipmen used to leave their "chestesses," and "sometimes

forget to pay for their breakfastesses," has degenerated into a carrier's receiving house. But "the Nut" preserves its old traditions. I inquired what in former days midshipmen chiefly ordered.

"Why," was the answer, "tea and toast and a fried sole. They loved fried soles, sir."

One hears of the Duke of Edinburgh coming into the old naval haunt, and sitting quietly in a corner, unrecognized by the landlord, who converses with him for half an hour, and then bows him out, ignorant of his rank. And ancient ledgers, submitted to me that I might take note of something of the old life of the town, gave me many a well-known name—Commerell, and Bradshaw, and Blackwood; Elphinstone, Cadogan, and Charteris; Fitzroy, Gambier, Gilford, Yorke, Pellew, Sullivan, Kerr, Herbert, Hornby, Scott, Byng, and many a score besides.

Sitting on the poop of the old *Victory*, one would like to listen to stories about the Hard. What great figures in history have walked along it! What shoals of skylarking midshipmen have come and gone upon that narrow bit of land! I thought of old Loveder, the patent-medicine man, with the jeweller's shop alongside; and how, in days of old, to raise the wind for a frolic, the middy would step into the jeweller's to purchase on credit a bracelet or diamond ring for his dear sister, and then step in next door to the useful Loveder and pawn the article for a third of the money his father would be charged for it. A man could go on dreaming for many a long hour on the poop of the *Victory*. It might help him, perhaps, to have the Reserve Squadron at anchor in Spithead, for there is a deal of poetry in contrasts; but he stands in no need of inspiration from ironclads when he is on the deck of Nelson's ship, when all is quiet around, and the murmurs of the blue-jackets and marines

forward scarcely reach his ear, when the warm wind is singing in the rigging overhead, and the current ripples past below with a fountain-like sound.

"Oh *Victory*, oh *Victory*, how you distract my poor brain!" Nelson cried, apostrophizing his ship, as she trembled from the concussion of her fierce broadsides. She rests quietly enough now, swinging regularly with the tide till one wonders when the day will arrive when she shall have made that pendulum-like movement for the last time. The silence in her cockpit is oppressive, and her interior decks are darksome wastes of plank, upon which one might fancy, after the living men aboard of her have turned in and the silence and shadow of night have come down, that groups of her ancient crew, a ghostly gathering, congregate to inspect the old scene of strife and to whisper in sighs memories of that glorious fateful October day. Meanwhile they are manning the yards of the ironclads yonder, the old *Duke of Wellington's* semaphore on her stern is working away like the arms of a man in a passion or the legs of a drunken sailor, and my boatman over the side is looking up at me, as if he would say, "D'ye mean to stop and live aboard? for, if so, ye'd better pay me, and let me go and hunt arter another job."

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## *OCEAN MESSAGES.*

AT certain seaside places there may sometimes be seen a half-dozen or more of men, widely scattered, walking about the sands when the tide has ebbed during a gale of wind, or after high water. With their hands in their pockets and their heads stooped they slowly move about, pausing now and again when they come to a lump of weed or a bit of chalk or rock to give it a kick. These fellows are on the look-out for anything the ocean may cast up. I cannot say that I ever yet met a man who had found anything, unless I except a boatman with a cheerful squint and a wild collection of ringlets, who once picked up a brooch, and, being told that it was brass, straightway went and sold it to a brother boatman as pure gold; a circumstance that in due course was followed by a fight. Still, though these long-shore seekers find nothing, they go on hunting about, in likely weather, full of hope, their hands in their pockets, their eyes on the sand, and their right leg ready to deliver a kick to anything that might perchance conceal something valuable beneath it. For coals will wash ashore; why not treasure? Ships are incessantly sinking; so what, these 'long-shore men want to know, is to prevent a purse of gold, a jewel-case, rings, watches, and who can tell what else, washing up with a strong flood tide and a



heavy inshore gale of wind? But, as I have said, the luck of these fellows is very small. The ocean is constantly sending messages, but they are mostly of a nature to set many of these boatmen running. They do not come in the form of bracelets, earrings, and watch-chains. Alas! they too often take dreadful and scaring shapes, and again and again the cruel white fingers of the deep deposit among the rocks or upon the floor of the brown sand an object that might well make even the hair of a hardy boatman stir upon his head.

It was but the other day that a man told me this story: "It was my look-out on the pier here. It was bitter cold just afore the dawn, and it was as black as a ship's forepeak with the hatches on. I was leaning over the side of the pier, looking away out to sea. It was low water, and below where I stood there was a stretch of dry sand. The white of the foam was all around it, so I could make out the sand by the glimmer; and after a bit, on looking hard, I fancied I see a black object lying there. I looked and looked, and my not being able to make head nor tail of it, and my seeing at the same time that it was something uncommon, caused me to feel curious to know what it was; so I chucked a rope over the side of the pier, and dropped down by it. Just then the dawn broke, yet with little light for a while. I went up to the object, and even then, though I stood as close to it as I am to you, I couldn't see what it was; but presently the light drawing out, what should it prove to be but half the body of a sailor from the waist down. All but what I saw had been eaten away, and his clothes was in rags, top of the socks washed off, though the boots was still on. Well, I stood peering and pondering and wondering what I should do with it; and then, thinks I, best thing I can do is to let it alone. So I climbed up

the pier wall again, and the next tide that came washed it away, and I afterwards heard it had been picked up a mile or two further down by the coastguards, and that it was buried."

Here was a marine picture! To complete it one had but to think of the cold winter dawn paling up into the dim sky till the sea-line and coast stood black as ink against the melancholy light, with a dull thunder coming along out of every flash of foam at the base of the ebony heights, whilst slowly the ocean reveals its grey, desolate, weltering waste to the eye following the pallid pouring of the surges down to where the white froth frames the little stretch of sand on which lies what was once haply a stout-hearted English seaman, but now a mutilated relic of him, watched with lifted hands and intent eyes by the sailor whom curiosity had taken to the spot. Of such are the ocean messages, seldom indeed the treasure desired and sought for by the peering, lazy, shambling sand-seeker, but coming rather in hints of bitter ravage, assurance of cruel death, and often—and more affecting still—suggestions of fearful ruin, such as may be found in a portion of a boat, a lifebuoy with a name upon it, a seaman's chest,—things which may leave many a fond and anxious heart hoping and dreading, whilst kept in ignorance of the truth for weeks and months.

A deal of the pathos and poetry of old Ocean lies in the messages she conveys. Occasionally there is deep irony. I find a wild stroke of this in a statement coming from a foreign port: "A black-painted board, marked in white letters 'No admittance except on business,' has washed ashore to-day." Observe the satirical travestying twist given to those words, "except on business," by the sea. No admittance! The board lies upon the sand; the breakers which threw it up are

receding with a sound of hissing laughter, and the peremptory order becomes a text so full of cynical meaning, that it needs but very little intelligence to resolve it into as significant a sermon as was ever preached by a thing inanimate. Sometimes there is a moving tenderness in the manner of these messages. I found this in a paragraph I read the other day: "Intelligence has been received of the barque *Fria* by means of a note which was found attached to the tail of a seagull caught by the captain of the *America*. According to the date of the message she was then eighty-four days out." Here we have the ocean's dove flying over the face of the waters, bearing a message destined to gladden and to give comfort. It is but the sea's paraphrase of the beautiful Bible story, well adapted indeed to an age in which countless mariners go down to the sea in ships and occupy their business in great waters and see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep. I hope not to be charged with affectation if I say that when I read that bit of shipping news, I was moved by the thoughts it awoke; for though I am ignorant of the fate of the ship "eighty-four days out," yet I could not but think of the hope that would be in those who wrote the note and affixed it to the gull; the eager gaze with which they would follow the flight of the beautiful creature as its grey plumes melted upon the yeast of the sea and the blue or brown of the sky. For that would be natural. They launched the sea-bird with hope, and they might well follow it with a blessing and a prayer. Ay, and one must go further yet, and think of the leagues measured by that gull; follow it in fancy adapting its flight to the liquid slanting of the surges, and pursue it in its lovely poisonings, its rapid wheelings, its dexterous and exquisite conflict with the pouring gale till it is in the hands of those capable

of interpreting the distant sailors' message and communicating it to those whose hearts are with that far-off barque. It is not the first by many times that seamen have despatched news of themselves home on the wings of the wild ocean fowl. Hear what a whaleman says :—

“One grand old albatross, whose stretch of wing was guessed as twelve feet, and whose great hooked beak seemed little injured by his capture, we preserved from death to convert into a messenger. Writing the words, ‘Chelsea, of N. L., Captain ———; all well; lat. 27° S. long. 36° W.,’ we secured the paper in oiled silk. This was waxed, varnished, rendered perfectly waterproof, and secured by a cord round the base of the bird’s neck. A red ribbon streamer was attached to attract attention. All being prepared, we headed our messenger by compass, a true course for our sweethearts and wives, and launched him on the wing with a loud hurrah.” \*

The albatross proved a faithful messenger. Five months after he had been despatched he was shot from a pilot-boat off New York, and the missive that he carried round his throat was printed in the American journals. “This,” says the whaleman, whose ship did not return home until forty-two months after the release of the bird from her decks, “was the first news our friends had received of the wild wanderers.” Born of the deep, and having their home and death-beds in its mighty fastnesses, the albatross and the gull, and all such birds as can be used by sailors for the transmission of news of themselves and their ships, may fairly be ranked as sea messengers, and the reports which they convey as ocean messages.

But what I have in mind chiefly is what the sea her-

\* “The Nimrod of the Sea,” a fine American whaling-book.

self does ; her grim and brief hints of her own cruelty ; her intimations to the land of what has happened upon her breast. Such a messenger is she, that she will convey to ships leagues distant the news of some frightful inland devastation, and tell the story of wasted towns and disrupted islands, of the upheaval of fresh shores, by floating whole miles of lava and pumicestone away out to vessels removed eight or ten degrees of latitude from the burning scene. The like of this must be ranked among her grand and most loftily tragical messages ; while for their appropriate conveyance she might be held to need the royal livery of a flaming sunset and a red gale blowing out of the heart of the luminary to give her the sweeping rush of huge and creaming seas.

But the ocean will touch in a breath the wildest extremes of news. From the report of so imperial a catastrophe as an earthquake she will descend to such trifling as this : “The captain of the *J. Borgardt* picked up a doghouse, about two and a half by one and a half, painted imitation red bricks, with painted windows and door on one side, and name ‘Madonna’ burned in. A yellow cock (dead) was inside.” Poor little yellow cock ! I call such news trifling ; and after miles of pumicestone announcing the shuffling and reconstruction of a slice of continent it seems so ; yet if one will but liken this little cock to a sparrow, which we know cannot fall but that it is cared for, why then what seems trifling vanishes in the fancy of the great ocean’s bearing of the tiny dead thing on its mighty bosom and its delivering of it at last as a message for some one sickening for news ; yea, holding it and caring for it and handing it over at last with such tenderness for so mean a thing as a little yellow cock, that for an explanation of such behaviour one might well feel disposed to peer into the crystal

heart of the deep for the human instincts which give men and women the capriciousness of the sea.

Albatrosses, gulls, and dead cocks we have seen; and sometimes the ocean makes a vehicle of a dog for information. Some time ago a steamer was thought to have been lost off the Burlings. All was uncertainty, however, till a fishing boat, passing the rocks, sighted a large dog upon them. When the animal saw the boat, it sprang into the sea, and was picked up, and proved to be a pointer, a very beautiful specimen. Whether more came of this I do not know; it happened some time since; but, so far as the ocean was concerned, this dog was the sole message she deigned to deliver. As a report it was plain enough; a disaster *had* taken place; and here was the dog, for those who found him to convert him into a clue. But beyond this hint the secret was the ocean's. In such passages her cruelty is unbounded. She destroys all trace of the deadly thing she has done saving a dumb beast; she smooths her breast that the sun and the stars may jewel it, and smiles over the grave into which her passionate surges have stamped down a ship and crew; leaving a dog as a relic for men to interpret, and reserving as her own mystery how it came about and the full story of the anguish, the heroism, the suffering, the despair of the wild tempestuous hour.

Messages she brings or revelations she delivers from all parts of the world; and as a hint of the awful sublimity with which she clothes them at times, take the account of a steamer in the midst of icebergs tall enough to be seen fifty miles distant, the night dark, a storm blowing, waterspouts whirling in dangerous proximity to the ship, and rendered visible by frequent violent flashes of lightning, which also disclosed a number of Arctic animals upon the ice, together with many

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skeletons. A message from the North Pole brought low into the Atlantic! Think of the wonderful scene—the heavy, washing sea; the motionless pallid heights of ice, with the roaring of the gale among their pinnacles and in their ravines, and the thunder of the billows against their sides, and the crashing and rending sounds of vast pieces detached from them and falling; the crouched dark figures of the Arctic beasts and the prostrate skeletons; the whirling waterspouts ascending in the electrical light from the clouds like bodies of fire into the sooty heavens, and the whole wild picture made visible by lightning! Is it not thus that a message from the terrible North Pole should come to us? Assuredly the sea is a mistress in the art of picture-making, and never fails of the exact effect she designs. Sometimes she gives expression to her meaning in a dumb-sign that may not necessarily have wilder and deeper significance than the mute face of a dog or the yellow feathers of a dead fowl, though it is the most afflicting form in which she can put her messages.

I find an illustration of this in the report of a barque that, in the English Channel, during half a gale of wind, passed a boat, in the bottom of which lay two dead men. The bodies were clearly visible, and the boat is described as painted black with a yellow stripe round her. Whence those men came, from what ship, from what situation of peril, from what scene of agony of shipwreck, who could tell but the ocean, or fully understand what those two men typified; the aimless, stormy, tossing, drifting for days and nights, the gathering madness of despair in the hollow eyes glancing here and there for help, the empty locker, the hollow breaker—signifying starvation and the more dreadful pangs of thirst? There are wanton idiots who, for sport as they think it, will write a lie upon a

piece of paper, enclose it in a bottle, and cause pain and anxiety to many ashore by the report that on such a day such and such a vessel was fast sinking, and that the scrap of paper was the last farewell of one of her people. I heartily wish old Ocean would convert one of these base jokers into a message, as a warning to others of a like kind not to burlesque her sacred and awful acts. A fellow who can thus put a lie into a bottle, and take his chance of plunging half a hundred families into consternation and misery, should be sent adrift in an open boat, in order that, should he survive the experience, he might completely master all that is meant by an ocean message, and hold the inarticulate reports of the sea in awe for ever after.

Observe how the mariner rightly compasses the terrible significance of the messages of the deep, and how he neutralizes by truth instead of increasing by invention when he writes, "Will you kindly report the above-named ship? Having lost my name-board in the Channel, which is certain to be picked up by fishermen or others, you will please to certify the same being washed away, and not to be in any way anxious; all hands in the best of health. This will be handed in at your place by the chief officer of the barque *Mozambique*, French, who boarded ship for medicine, master sick to death." Indeed, there is scarcely a meaner act practicable to an ignoble mind than the false creation of sea-reports. So terrible are the great majority of these messages, so full of deep anguish over which the salt tides have closed, so fateful in their power of awakening grief and fear ashore, that it is scarcely credible any human being should be found audaciously cruel enough to use the majestic and terrible breast of the deep as a stage for an imaginary tragedy whose verisimilitude is



created by the use of real names only. Let such a man think for a moment of what happens at sea, of the countless hearts on land which day and night are yearning towards the deep, where loved ones are bravely battling for bread for wives and children.

Think of such an ocean message as this, given in five lines: "The brig *Goldfinder*, from San Domingo, bound for Boston, has been towed into Delaware Breakwater, with four men on board frozen to death, the captain frost-bitten, and only one man fit for duty. She was picked up while drifting at sea and covered with ice." I have read many accounts of terrible shipwrecks, and I have witnessed in my time some lamentable scenes, the memory of which I shall take to the grave with me, but I am not acquainted with any form of marine suffering I could point to as surpassing the utter misery you may find in this five-line story of the brig *Goldfinder*. The poet fascinates us with the music to which he weds the tale of the Ancient Mariner who, with his glittering eye, constrained the wedding guest to forego the feast and listen; but how much more thrilling than Coleridge's melodious verse would be the harsh, bare prose of that brig's one man who was fit for duty, could he tell us what befell the vessel and her little company of men, hour after hour and day after day; when the cold gathered round them as a wall; when spray and snow were hardened into ice that glazed the hull and rigging till the brig would seem to be enclosed in glass; when the frozen iron-hard canvas defied the hands of the languishing dying men; when first one and then another of the four lay down to expire; when the captain, maimed by the bitter blast, fell helpless, and when the one man capable of duty, finding himself alone, abandoned the wheel and left the vessel to drift at the mercy of the driving seas

pouring in mountains of ink under an Arctic gloom pale with whirling snow. There is no melody in rhyme to lift such an ocean message as this above the savage and cruel and pathological horror it has in prose. It finds its proper setting in the fierce complaining voice of the black North wind, and like other reports of human anguish which the wild ocean brings to the living from all parts of her measureless realm, it is best left unembellished by fancy; best left to appeal, out of its grimness, or its bitter humour, or its stern and naked tragic intimations, to the heart that knows how to moralize the most prosaic piece of wreckage that the sullen and reluctant breakers can leave wet and black and gleaming upon the brown sands of the seashore.

## *TYPES OF 'LONG-SHOREMEN.*

NATURAL antipathies have been apologized for without being explained by Charles Lamb. They are indeed unaccountable, but that does not prevent them from catching a very strong hold of a man. I felt that the other day when I found myself eyeing a round-legged, nautical-looking person with much aversion. I had never addressed him, and did not know his name, and yet I took so strong a dislike to him that I had some difficulty in restraining myself from going up to him and talking offensively about his appearance and the like. The truth is, he was a lazy, loafing, cadging, idling rascal, dressed up in pilot cloth and brass buttons, and a cap with a naval peak. His face was burnt, but then one knew the tan came through exposure by lying on his back or sleeping on a bench; he had a nose that made a straight line with his forehead till it came to near the end, and then it went straight out so as to form a brown and gleaming knob; he had large loose sprawling hands which he was too lazy even to thrust into his pockets, for he kept them dangling at his sides. I watched him then and afterwards, to a certain degree fascinated by his aggressive loafingness and laziness. He would walk shufflingly a short distance and then sit down; and his manner of sitting down was so annoying, it was so

irritating from the sigh of relief one knew that the fat and useless lubber gave, and from the stretching out of his legs and the lolling of his hands (unless he groped for his pipe), and from the whole round-backed, telescoped posture of the fellow, that one felt—having regard to his able-bodied appearance, to the conviction that he consumed a great deal of beer, and to the knowledge that there were hundreds of men without one-third of this creature's strength who were pitifully feeding their families by breaking stones on the highway,—one felt, I say, that the only way to do this 'long-shoreman justice would be to send him to sea in a Nova Scotia ship commanded by a Yankee-Irish skipper, brought up to regard sailors as a community of persons sent into this world merely for the purpose of being skinned. He was a distinct type of 'long-shoreman, but a lucky fellow; for I understood that some one had given him the job of looking after a steam launch when laid up, for which he received pay enough to enable him to sew brass buttons on his jacket, and to lie at full length with a pipe in his mouth as long as ever he found that posture convenient.

The watching him recalled other types I had taken notice of in my time, and I found myself smiling at some of the figures that rose before my mind's eye. They are all of them still alive, and to be discovered by the exercise of a little diligence at most of the ports and harbours round the coast. There is the grumbling 'long-shoreman. He prefers stone posts to seats, and would rather lean than sit. When you accost him he will seldom turn, but will answer you without shifting his position, and often without lifting his mouth and nose off the jersey sleeve he rests his head upon. You say, for instance, cheerfully, "Fine morning, Wilkinson?"

"Fine what?" he answers.

"Fine morning."

"Why, the sky's blue, sartinly; but I don't know about it's bein' *fine*. It may be fine to the like o' you; but I don't see nothen very *fine* about it."

"Have you been out yet?"

"Out where?"

"Why, out to sea, man—out in a boat with a party?"

"Out to sea with a party!"—here he gives a hoarse laugh, but as he continues talking with his back upon you, and as you are therefore unable to see his face, you are not presumed to know what that laugh exactly signifies. "There ain't no parties left, mister. They was all swallered up by that there airthquake t'other day, over at Colchester. An' I heartily wish that that same bloomin' airthquake 'ud come along and swaller the whole bilin' of us up. That's my wish. Parties!"

And here he expresses savage discontent by a fierce shifting of the leg he is resting on, and at the same time you catch him glancing sullenly to right and left, evidently wishful that others besides yourself should hear his views.

But uncomfortable as this type of man is, he is not quite so depressing as the despondent 'long-shoreman.

"We're all a-starvin', sir," he says to you confidentially, and with the air of a man who, feeling that death is imminent, has made up his mind to meet it with a composed countenance. "It's little more than hanimated bones, as the sayin' is, wot goes about askin' for custom; but it don't sinnify. Every man's time must come, and wot I say is, the sooner mine arrives the better. That's wot I says."

"Nonsense," I exclaimed to a fellow who had thus addressed me. "There's room enough for all."

"Yes; and why?" he answered quickly. "'Cause

we're all shadders—brought about by the want of wittles. Course there's room."

"Well, you don't look to be a shadow, anyway," said I, running my eye over his stout figure.

"Wot you notice is clothes," he answered. "See me in bed, and I allow the first thing you'd do 'ud be to start off for a hundertaker. But I don't blame no one. It's nobody's fault. We're too many. My argeyment is we wants a pestilence."

"No, no; the more the merrier. You ought to do well here; you have a very pretty harbour."

"Why, 'tain't bad *as* a 'arbour. But then it's nothen *but* a 'arbour. I comes down here at six to take a look round and there's the 'arbour. I goes 'ome for a mouthful o' dry bread, and when I comes back it's still the 'arbour. All the mornin' the 'arbour's a facin' of me. I goes 'ome to dinner, call it a bit o' fish if I'm in luck, and when I comes back there's the 'arbour. The 'arbour's there all the arternoon, and when tea's done, blowed if it ain't still the 'arbour." And here he writhed about upon the pier-wall over which he was leaning with a face so melancholy and contorted that I was not sorry to move away.

Another type of 'long-shoremen I have met and watched may be called the "impostors." They have various ways of deluding an inland public and so getting a living. I remember one specimen. He was a broad man in a glazed hat, and I always fancied that he struggled by means of his dress to give himself the appearance of a mariner who had sailed into distant parts, and who might be presumed, without great risk of violating the truth, of having been shipwrecked among savages, of having suffered considerable anguish from thirst, and of having carried a troubled conscience about

with him ever since, from remembering that he was the first man to taste the cook. This person might be found hanging about from morning to night, with a telescope under his arm. There was an inscription on this glass that was a lie. The man had himself paid for the engraving and invented the legend, which recited how So-and-so (giving his name) had saved a vast number of lives from numerous dreadful wrecks, and how this glass was presented to him as a small token of the high esteem in which he was held, and of the donors' appreciation of his magnificent British pluck. This telescope was the fellow's stock-in-trade; it was all he had to live upon; and, on the whole, I believe he did pretty well out of it. His practice was to wait until a "likely" party of people approached, on which, presenting his glass at the horizon, he would instantly discover something singularly exciting and surprising out that way, and by loud exclamations addressed to himself, and by sundry effective distortions of the body, all more or less indicative of astonishment, he rarely failed to bring the party around him. He would then beg them to look for themselves, and engage them in conversation, and show them the inscription on the telescope, and if they ventured to leave him without giving him money he would follow them with many importunities and melancholy assurances that terrible sufferings at sea had broken down his spirit, so that he was no longer the man he was; all which rarely failed of its purpose. But it was very seldom that he did not get a sixpence or even more for his wonderful discoveries on the horizon and for the peeps at them he enabled people to take through his glass. He once nearly caught me; but then we were strangers to each other. As I passed him he exclaimed, "Lord, now! to think of a wreck on such a day as this."

"Where's the wreck?" I asked, naturally struck by such an exclamation.

"Why, yonder," said he, pointing. "You'll see it plain through this here glass."

I looked, but saw nothing.

"Where do you say it is?" I inquired, working away with his old telescope.

He took it from me, looked himself, and then exclaimed, "Yes, I was afeard so. She's gone down. I 'ope there's no lives lost." And he then, in a changed voice, asked me to read the "writin'" on the glass.

I laughed in his face and walked on.

He chased me, and said, "Won't you give me the valley of a glass o' beer? Hang it all, ye've had the use of my telescope."

"Yes," I replied, "to look at the wreck you saw; and when I can see it you shall have two glasses of beer."

Another type that amused me much at times is the polite 'long-shoreman. His attention to the ladies is extremely edifying and impressive.

"Hope I see you well, mum, I'm sure," he exclaims, deforming himself with bows as he grins into the face of some old woman who approaches with the wish to take a sail in the pleasure boat he has charge of, but who cannot make up her mind. "I'm pleased, indeed, to see you a-lookin' so youthful, mum. The sea's werry beautiful an' fine to-day, mum."

"Ain't it rayther rough, mister?" the old woman inquires.

"Gor' bless you! rough? Couldn't be calmer if it wur hicc, mum. Hallow me to take yer 'and, mum, and lead you on board. William, chuck that there line out of the road o' the lady. Don't mind leanin' on me, mum —I'm used to bein' pressed upon by your sex, mum.



Mind the step. Don't attempt to jump, mum, for that bonnet o' yours sets just as it should, and a jump might halter it, for sayin' which I am sure, mum, I can only humbly arx your pardin."

And so he rattles on till he gets the old female aboard, where she sits down upon a cushion carefully adjusted for her with his own hands, perfectly satisfied in her mind that he is not only a very discerning, agreeable, and even accomplished man, but such a sailor as it must be a positive treat to be in a gale of wind with.

The lying 'long-shoremen is another type well known to students of the race. One that I knew got his living as a waterman, and the lies he would tell to recommend his boat were rendered remarkable by the facility with which he invented them, and the unblushing impudence with which he delivered them.

"Can your boat sail pretty well?" I once asked him.

"D'ye mean in point o' speed, or whether she's good at going to wind'ard?"

"Well, both."

"Sail pretty well?" he exclaimed, with a slow smile.

"D'ye see that lugger there?"

"Yes."

"Well, that there lugger's over eighteen ton, and with the wind abeam and a strong breeze can do her eleven knots comfortable and take no notice of it. When did ye arrive here?"

I told him.

"Well, the day afore that it came on to blow a strong wind from the west'ards. Me and that lugger was a ratchin' in together, seven miles out. I was detarmined to let 'em know what my boat could do, for there's a deal o' jealousy about her, and they're always a strivin' to run her down behind my back, by sneers and the likes

o' that. So I lets the lugger go ahead of me by pretty nigh a two-mile board, then hauls aft my sheet and follers; and 's true as that there boot's on my foot, I was in this harbour, the boat at her moorin's, mast unstepped and sail stowed away, and myself havin' a glass at the Gun and Dawgs up th' High Street when the lugger was just a comin' round on her last ratch."

I observed that considering his boat was only a wherry, and that she carried but a very short mast and a very little sail, such speed and qualities as he had told me about were truly remarkable.

"Ay, it's her smallness as makes her remarkable," he answered. "It's just that what makes her so much talked about. There's been no end of pieces wrote about her in the papers. And don't she deserve it? 'Tain't only her speed and her liveliness in a seaway in which I've afterwards heerd big wessels have foundered at their anchors; the heminent men as has sat in them starnsheets would surprise you. Ay, they would. I've took out Wilkie, him as wrote about a woman that went a wanderin' here and there in a white gownd, and Baron Bulwer, him as wrote a book, likewise the Lord Chancellor, but I didn't know who *he* was till arter I'd put him ashore, and a first-class musician named Handel."

"Who?" I exclaimed.

"Handel," he repeated.

"You must be mistaken," said I. "Handel died last century."

"Had he no relaytives?" asked he.

"None likely to go out in that boat and call themselves first-class musicians," I answered.

"Then all I can say is, the party as told me his name was Handel, and that he wrote bits for the horgan, must have been a bloomin' liar. Why he should ha' gone out

o' his way to tell such a crammer as that to a man like me, blessed if I can guess, for of all things I hates most there's nothen annoys me more than lies."

Another type of 'long-shoreman I have in my mind is the man who has seen better days: who has been a gentleman's servant, perhaps, or an under-steward in a passenger ship, or even a clerk in some humble office, and has drifted down to the seaside, where, tanned by the sun and encased in blanket breeches, he passes very well for one of the many beach-combers who are all day long keeping a bright look-out for nothing. I have usually found this type cynical, and with a disposition to spit after making an observation. He is so proud of the capacity to aspirate his h's that I have known him to stick them into many words which did not require them. His tendency is towards a pensive posture when he lolls; when he leans he takes such attitudes as his cumbrous trousers allow him; and he has smiled wanly at me when conversing, as if he would have me to know that the light of other days had not entirely faded off his mind, in spite of the arduous vocation of lounging which the necessities of a second wife and two families of children had obliged him to descend to. As a rule, he is one of the very few 'long-shoremen who can read; and I have often watched him handling a newspaper—given him by some passing hand—with much ostentation of engrossment, as though there was indeed nothing left worth living for now but Parliamentary intelligence; yes, and I have even seen him wear spectacles on these occasions, as though education was a thing not to be lightly exhibited in public.

Then there is the pious 'long-shoreman, usually a man of advanced years, who gets his living by "blessin' th' lard" for everything that befalls him, whether it be a

sixpence or a tumble off a slipway. He hangs close in the wake of elderly ladies, follows them to their devotions, and takes care that they shall see him in a soothed and evangelical attitude when they come away. When not to be found about the wharves or piers, search made for him in an adjacent public-house is almost certain to be successful. He knows his trade, however, too well to get drunk, or, at all events, to be seen drunk. On the whole he is the meanest and most discreditable specimen of the tribe; but, as I have said, he is usually old, and in his years one is willing to find an excuse, not for his vices, but for the tricks he practises to get bread.

## *SEAFARING DELIGHTS.*

SOME time ago a great outcry was raised in Newcastle-on-Tyne and the adjacent ports over the imprisonment of some seamen who had been charged with refusal of duty. When at sea they had been ordered by the mate to scrape the gaff. They looked up at it, shook their heads, and declined. In consequence of this the captain entered them in the official log-book, and on his arrival in England gave them into custody, with the result of their being brought before the Newcastle magistrates, and sentenced to a term of imprisonment about equal to what a man would get for returning home drunk and throwing his wife out of window. The gaff of a ship is a spar attached to the mizzenmast, and it serves to stretch the head of the spanker just as the boom extends the foot of it. Sometimes it is contrived to slide down the mast, sometimes it is fixed, in which case it is called a standing gaff. It runs up at an angle from the mast, as the gaff of a yacht's mainsail does when it is set, and those to whom the pleasant job of scraping it is given come down by the lift or pendent, or whatever it may be called, to the gaff-end, where lovingly with legs and arms embracing the sharply sloping, smooth, and slippery spar, they hold on with all their might, and ply their scrapers as best they can. The undertaking is as much

like the performance of creeping out to the end of a greasy pole to get the pig there as can be supposed, only it is much more dangerous, for if the greasy-pole walker falls he hits the water, whereas if the sailor rolls off the gaff, why, if he doesn't strike the deck and break his neck, he goes overboard and is drowned.

Whether a captain has a right to give any seaman an order the carrying out of which can hardly fail to put his life in jeopardy, it is not my business to determine. I am sure no high-minded master of a ship would require a man to do anything which he would not do himself. Would the North-country skipper, whose men were locked up for refusing to imperil their lives, have undertaken to prove to them that no risk attended the order he gave by straddling the gaff himself? No shipmaster, fit to have command over men and charge of ships, would ever dream of imperilling the lives of his crew, unless indeed he was in a situation that forced him to give instructions dangerous to execute, but essential as furnishing a chance of preservation. I remember once a seaman crawling out to the end of the foretopmast studding sail boom to reeve the tack that had become unrove. It was a fine day, with a light swell running. The mate who had ordered the man out stood looking on. The captain came on deck, saw what was going forward, but said nothing till the man was off the boom; whereupon he turned upon the mate, abused him for ten minutes, said he had no right to put a man to such a job, that he would have ordered the seaman in if he hadn't been afraid of flurrying him and causing him to fall, and wound up by telling him never again whilst he remained in that ship to give a man any task he would not do himself, or what was calculated to needlessly imperil human life. Speaking for myself, I must confess that I would rather slide, as best I could,

out to a stunsail boom-end to reeve a tack there than jockey a gaff fixed at an angle of forty-five degrees and take my chance of balancing myself on the slippery and swaying slope whilst I used my hands to scrape it. But such questions are entirely matters of opinion. I have spoken to many seafaring people about that business of the gaff, and some have said that the men ought to have obeyed the captain's orders, as the work was neither difficult nor dangerous, and is repeatedly performed by boys at sea; whilst others declared that the men were right to refuse, that the work was utterly unnecessary, and extremely perilous, and that justice was never more uselessly and cruelly misdirected than when these seamen were sent to gaol, not for refusing to do their duty, but for declining to break their necks or tumble overboard.

It happened that the spar was ultimately scraped by the apprentices who properly fall under the name of "boys," though they may be stout, square men with whiskers, considerably over twenty years old. When I discovered this, I could not help reflecting upon the large amount of dirty and dangerous work that is put upon boys at sea, and it was not without wonder that, spite of a tolerably extensive acquaintance with marine literature, I could not recollect a single piece of writing in which lads were advised not to go to sea. This is rather curious. Books and poems have been written by men of letters and poets advising youths to have nothing to do with literature as a calling. I have heard of dehortations, delivered by clerical lips, from the adoption of the church as a profession, on the ground that curates are the worst-paid body of men in the country. The navy and the army have been pronounced very poor look-outs indeed for young gentlemen, in several works easy to name, and written by persons well acquainted with their

subjects. And I believe there have not been wanting barristers who have cautioned parents against the bar as a channel for their sons, as there are doctors who have uttered similar warnings in respect of their own calling. But what merchant sailor, or individual with knowledge of the work and routine carried on on board merchant ships, has ever committed his experiences to paper in the shape of a piece of advice to boys? There may be patriotic reasons for this. The nation wants sailors, and it will not do to frighten lads off by horrible pictures of life at sea. But this is a mistake. The kind of lads who go sea as apprentices, whom their fathers equip with a uniform and clothes, and pay premiums for, are not wanted. They go with the idea to become mates and captains; but there are by far too many mates and captains already, numbers of them in extreme poverty, who would gladly take any berth they could get, though the pay might crimson their cheeks to name; and, consequently, any further inflation of these swollen ranks by lads starting as premium apprentices, and ending, after five years of pitiful drudgery with a second mate's certificate, obtained, of course, by passing an examination, is naturally undesirable.

It might not be very patriotic, perhaps, to tell boys the truth about the sea, if when they shipped they went before the mast. There can never be too many good merchant seamen, men who crawled as boys into their profession through the hawsepipe, and who have learnt their vocation inch by inch. The day certainly may come when such sailors will not be wanted; when the only necessary person on board will be found in the engine-room; when the ship will be steered automatically; when lights, lead, and look-out will all be the work of machinery; when there will be no masts, nor sails, nor



rigging; and when a steamboat will no more stand in need of a nautical man in her than a locomotive does. But that time has not yet come. For my part I hope it never will; and for the present, at all events, we may count upon going on wanting supplies of sailors; but not apprentices who dream of ending as mates and captains. They may be made use of aboard whilst their indentures remain uncanceled; but one would willingly sacrifice their services that their parents might save their premiums and cost of outfit; and if this need not be considered, why, then let me say that, seeing that many of these youths are young gentlemen who come from inland parts and know the sea from novels, and that they gladly abandon their calling so soon as ever they can quit it, it would be a real kindness on the part of some qualified person—some retired shipowner, say, who has commanded ships, and who in his day has received a large sum in premiums—to write a book representing life at sea, what boys have to do on board ship, with a careful description of the food, though the attention need not be fatigued by a Lubbock-like analysis of the character, behaviour, and structure of the worm well known to sailors as “weevils.” It would be a bit of a blow, no doubt, for boys of the class I have in my eye, to find that all the romance of the sea lies on the land; to discover that all that allures and enchants their youthful imagination is to be found, not upon that heaving surface whereon it is their fatality to be by-and-by seasick, but in their fathers’ bookshelves or in their own little collections. But truth is not to be repressed merely because it is obnoxious to sentiment that may sooner or later lead one into a wet deck-house, feed one with dreadful pork and the unspeakable contents of red cans, and to drive one aloft dangling a slush-pot, there to grease down a reeling mast. The truth should

be told, and may yet be told, even some time before the last sailing ship belonging to Great Britain is written off as missing. There is, at all events, a text for a beginning to be found in that matter of scraping the gaff I have referred to. The men refused—the able seamen, who, of course, one naturally thinks of as tough, seasoned, wiry fellows, with fingers like fishhooks; these men refused, and the apprentices or boys were put to the work. The pluck is excellent; one admires it greatly; still one is sorry for the lads, for the hardship is unmistakably plain. They were made to do at the risk of their lives what able-bodied seamen had refused on that account; and in all probability it was because they were lads, and helpless, and accustomed to being put to all sorts of dirty and perilous work that they climbed up to that dangerous spar and scraped it, scarcely daring so much as to wonder whether they should even get through without a flying fall overboard or a broken head on deck. What romance is here! The vang was hauled taut of course, and the gaff therefore was steady; and as these youths—how many scraped I don't know—leaned, clinging as best they could upon the sharp slant of the spar, one would like to think of them recalling the dreams that had sent them to sea—the white decks, the dashing frigates, the glittering uniforms of Marryat, the mysterious islands and fairy-like schooners of Cooper, the polaccas and feluccas, the picaroons and slavers of Michael Scott—and contrasting those visions in calf bindings and sixpenny highly coloured covers with the skipper scowling up at them and bawling, “Bear a hand with that scraping, now, you youngsters!”

But it is not only scraping the gaff. There are more disagreeables to be told of than that. I know one—and I can speak from experience. It is when a boy of fifteen,

say, reckoned a little fellow for his age, scrambles aloft on a dark and blowing night on to the mainyard—I will call it the mainyard—and finds himself alongside a great seaman, twice as tall as he is, and immensely heavy. A landsman would not see the point of this; but let him know that under every yard there is stretched what is termed a foot-rope for the sailors to stand upon; this foot-rope is supported at certain distances by pieces of ropes called stirrups, to prevent it sinking down with the weight of the men; but the foot-rope travels through the eyes of the stirrups, so that if a short man of light weight stands on a foot-rope next a tall man of heavy weight, the rope will sink with them, and leave the little man without the capacity of doing any other work than holding on with all his might to the jack-stay. This has been my experience again and again repeated when a boy. I have endeavoured to overcome the difficulty by getting a stirrup between my knees, and standing with one foot on either side it; but it would not do; the weight to right and left sloped the foot-rope almost up and down till my legs have opened like a sprite's in a pantomime.

Yes! it is pleasant for a small boy to be upon a large yard on a black and blowing night, the ship pitching heavily, the wet canvas slatting furiously, and swelling up upon the yard till it rounds into iron balloons on either side the stay; pleasant when his short legs whip off the support for the feet half a dozen times in as many minutes; when he must do nothing but hold on or go overboard, and when the sturdy fellows along the yard are kicking up the foot-rope with every toss they give to the skin of the sail. Does some nautical man ask what business a youngster has up there? Let him also inquire what business he has upon a gaff, scraping it—upon a spar where there

are no foot-ropes—nothing but the head-outhaul, which a boy could not stand upon even if he could scrape the gaff all round by using that rope as a support for his feet.

Routine, in a sense, is different in ships. Captains have their whims like other folks, and what the ship-master was used to in *his* day he will commonly endeavour to carry with him into every vessel he takes charge of. But there is one marine condition that is the same everywhere, whether encountered in a ship commanded by one of the most humane and God-fearing of sailors, or in a craft whose skipper is a Yankee-Irish angel, with a revolver in his bosom, a dagger in each coat pocket, and a hand ever on the alert for the heaviest loose iron belaying pin that is nearest it. That condition is stormy weather, and it is one which very few boys who want to go to sea form correct ideas of. A storm in a story may be very affecting, and even agitating, if told with strength and truth; but it doesn't wet the reader to the skin, it doesn't extinguish the kitchen fire, and force him to eat dry bread for dinner, it doesn't soak his bed, and imperil his life, by putting him to all sorts of tasks, which he has to execute whilst holding on with his eyelashes. But a storm at sea often does this, and more. I can assure any young gentleman with a taste for the ocean, whose eye may be disdainfully glancing at this page, that it is easier to read about standing up to one's waist in froth and water in the lee scuppers than to suffer the experience; easier to read about living in a deck-house, and going to it and finding it full of water, your chest upside down, and the contents washing about, and the bedclothes in your bunk sopping; easier to read about being awakened from a sound sleep by a loud cry of "All hands! look alive for God's sake! don't stop to put on your clothes;" then

rushing out to find the ship on her beam ends, a group of large icebergs on the weather bow, the night black as a pall, blowing a gale of wind full of ice and wet, the watch on deck yelling at the ropes, the yards on the caps, the sails up in the blackness sending shocks of thunder through the ship with every beat; then having to group your way up the rigging on to the main top-gallant yard, the shrouds glazed with ice, the ratlines stiff as marling spikes, the yard so braced that the sail is full, and the noise so great that the mate cannot hear you and your companions screaming from the crosstrees to haul in upon the weather brace:—this and a hundred other matters, I say, are infinitely easier to read about than to experience. Does a boy think such work “fine” and “grand”? Well, nobody would wish to see him cured of an enthusiasm that might end in making a real sailor of him; but if he is not a robust lad, if he has not the least idea of the realities of the life the books he has devoured have made him crazy to join, if one could pretty safely predict that a couple of weeks of seafaring will sicken him of the ocean, and that he will yearn for the hour to come when the vessel’s arrival shall enable him to hurry home to his parents and exclaim, with his burnt face full of the pathos of sincerity, “I will leave the sea, I will have nothing more to do with ships; I will be a farmer.” Supposing all this, then it is but right, I consider, that an effort should be made to preserve him from an unnecessary ordeal, from a worthless probation, during which he will probably learn nothing but a few bad words, by a plain and honest submission of the truth, written, as I have suggested, by some retired owner and mariner who knows all about premiums, and how very few of the youths who start in the calling with a flourish of buttons remain at sea when their term of servitude has expired.

## *DIVING.*

I WAS recently in company with a Whitstable diver, a person of great intelligence and of long experience in his calling—one, too, who had owned as well as sailed ships—so that he could claim to be as familiar with the surface of the ocean as he was with the bottom of it. Our talk was altogether about his vocation, and I propose in this place to briefly set down a little of what I can recollect of our chat. To me, I will confess, the diver's calling possesses an interest that is quite fascinating. I see, for instance, a noble ship sailing by. Her canvas towers to the heavens; the blue ripples melt into snow against her cutwater; the high sun kindles a constellation of flashing stars in her brass-work and whatever is polished aboard of her; many faces look over her rail, and her gallant fabric is a little world vital with human life and all its hopes and yearnings, its sorrows and its passions. But in a few hours the sea is bare of her; she has been in collision and gone down; she has swung foul of another ship, stove her side in, and foundered. She has found her grave, and there, upright upon the sandy bottom, with yards across, sails furled or set upon them, all the furniture of her decks in its place—a dim, green, startling phantom of the noble reality that was just now sailing in

beauty under the white sunlight—there she rests never more to be viewed by mortal eye save that of the diver.

One thinks of the wonderful, awful sights the diver sees in the course of a long experience. In one of Maury's works there is a curious fancy. Speaking of the bottom of the ocean as tideless and lifeless, and charged with powerful embalming qualities, he indulges in the strange conjecture that all the corpses which, with weights attached, have been committed to the deep in blue water, are now standing on the bottom, their lineaments as perfect as they were on the day they were cast over the side. "When a person dies on board a man-of-war," he says, "and is to be buried at sea, his body is sewed up in his hammock, with one or two cannon balls secured to his feet. After reading the burial service the plank is tilted and the body slides off feet foremost into the sea. In this position the body sinks, in this position it reaches the bottom, and in this position it may remain, beyond the reach of decay, a perfect human form for ages." Fantastic as the notion is, it is extremely suggestive, and the wildest, strangest picture that ever presented itself to the human mind opens itself to the imagination that figures the dim twilight realms of plain and valley and mountain under the sea covered with the motionless bodies, in all postures, of the generations who have sunk into the blue heart of the ocean. Such sights are imaginary; what the diver beholds is real, and often more ghastly than the most active fancy could coin. He may have to descend to a wreck full of dead men, and women, and children, and the darkness in the cabins and the fog-like thickness of the water, by forcing him to feel with his hands, should, one might suppose, raise the horror of such a job into something that might well tax the nerves of the lonely,

blinded groper. Think of the dead faces his hand touches, the attitudes of agony his fingers follow out—the baby clasped to the mother's breast, the daughter locked in the old father's embrace, husband and wife inseparable in their death clutch; and the deep silence and the sullen dulness of green glimmering from the water over the hatchways; and amidst all these dead people, surrounded by the shocking stillness and the frightful twilight, figure to yourself the diver groping, looking in his helmet and dress like some ocean ghoul as he seems to float from body to body, feeling his way as he goes, and pausing often.

I said to my friend, "Divers usually descend by a ladder over the vessel's side, I think?"

"Some do," he answered; "but I don't bother about the ladder. When I'm ready I jump overboard."

"How do you find the wreck?"

"By sweeping for it; we then attach a grapnel to it, and the diver goes down by the line to which the grapnel is fast."

"How about the air?"

"Well, just as much as is needful must be pumped into us; for, if there's too little, of course the sense of suffocation comes, and if too much—why, then the dress is inflated, and we come up to the surface against our will."

"Have you any method of regulating excess of air?"

"Yes, by a little tap affixed to the helmet; if there's too much air we turn the tap on, and let it blow out."

"I suppose the pump requires great attention?"

"Yes; but divers don't think much of their lives; they take what comes, and are pretty negligent. I went out once in a smack. None of the men knew anything about the operations of pumping and diving. I wrote



down the signals on a piece of paper, thinking that, with that in their hands, they couldn't possibly make a mistake, and then went over the side. After a bit I wanted a pair of slings, and signalled for them. The men, who could scarcely read, looked at the paper, and, getting confused, took fright and thought I was dying, and set to work to drag me to the surface. I was in a great passion with them for bringing me up, though it might have been worse."

"But is it possible," I exclaimed, "that divers will trust their lives to persons who are ignorant of the essential duties included in attendance upon them?"

"Why, certainly not, as a rule," he answered. "But the truth is, we never think. Were we once to take to considering what our risks are, how the least neglect above, the least accident below, might make dead men of us, I dare say there would be a good many who'd knock off. A man wants nerves for the work, and nerves don't allow of thinking. I knew a young amateur, as plucky a fellow as you could imagine; he'd been up in a balloon, down in a mine, and done a lot of things requiring courage. Yet when he put on the diving dress and went down the ladder, he signalled to be hauled up before his head was out of sight. He said he could stand a great deal, but not that."

"What are the signals?" I inquired.

"When a man's reached the bottom," he answered, "he gives one pull, to signify that all's right. If he gives two pulls, that's a sign he wants the slings to be sent down to him to secure to the cargo or whatever it may be, that it may be hauled up; three pulls mean asking for larger slings, those sent down not being stout enough for the work; four pulls represent that 'dogs' are wanted for heavy weights—that's to say, appliances for prising

up lumpish stuff, such as lead, iron roofing, and so forth; five pulls give the order to hoist away upon the 'dogs;' six pulls explain that the diver is foul of the wreck."

"What do you mean by foul of the wreck?"

"Why, that the pipe which supplies me with air has got round some piece of the wreck in such a way that single-handed I am unable to clear it."

"Can they help you from the surface?"

"No. All they can do is to go on pumping air into your helmet and dress."

"What happens then?"

"Why, they must endeavour to send away for another diver to go down and help you. Perhaps there may be no vessel at hand to despatch; or you may be thirty or forty miles from the nearest port where a diver may be had. If that's so, you may be kept waiting under water a whole day."

"A fearful situation! I mean as regards the anxiety one would feel."

"It certainly is trying. I knew a diver who went down to the wreck of a brig laden with rum. Both his pipe and life-line got foul of the rum casks which came floating up on his breaking out one. All his efforts to clear himself were of no use. What was he to do? He knew hours must elapse before help could be obtained; so, making up his mind, he allowed them on the surface to pump his helmet and dress full, then drawing his knife he cut the pipe and signalled to be hauled up. He was half fainting when he arrived, but he rallied all right."

"How long does the air stored in the helmet and dress last you?"

"A minute and a half. It is then 'good night,' sir. A thing happened some months since which I didn't like

to hear of at all. A diver was down in a wreck, but some considerable time elapsed without his signalling to the people above. Instead of sending for help they cut his line and pipe and went ashore for a diver to bring up the man's body. I don't say he wasn't dead, but there was the chance any way of his being alive, and cutting his pipe might have been just murdering him for all the people concerned in the job were aware."

"How do you manage if your life-line fouls?"

"Oh, that's an easy matter. If my line fouls and I find I can't clear it, I cut it, when the end is hauled up and seen to be cut. Then the people above bend on another line to a shackle, which they slip over the pipe, and which runs down with the line to me."

"How deep have you gone?"

"I have never had any call to go deeper than twelve fathoms, though I wouldn't object to eighteen."

"What is the greatest depth of water undertaken by divers?"

"Twenty-five fathoms, I believe. I have heard of a man going down to thirty fathoms, but he was brought up dead."

"Can you sec under water?"

"Very seldom. I remember years ago going down to have a look at the wreck of the *Forfarshire*—the vessel Grace Darling and her father pulled to, not from to windward of the island, as the story says, but from the lee side, where the coble lay ready, and where the water was smooth. I dived just out of curiosity, and saw the old hooker plain enough. Off that same coast I've been down in water so bright that I've stood among weeds as tall as this room, a beautiful garden of them, and watched 'em with delight, almost to forgetting the job I was down there for, and I saw all kinds of fish swimming about and

appearing quite close through the glass in my helmet, though if I put out my hand to them I found them to be fathoms away ”

“ But as a rule you can't see ? ”

“ No; no more than if I was looking through a London fog. And then take a ship. Suppose you were to come into this room at night without a light—you couldn't see. So it is with a ship's hold and cabin under water. It's pitch dark. A man can only grope.”

“ It must be dangerous work moving about among cargo under such circumstances.”

“ Why, not when you're used to it. A bit of a sea on above is often inconvenient, by making the vessel on the surface roll and tauten the tackle for heaving up the cargo, and so running up a mass of dead weight on a sudden before you're ready, and then letting it come down crash again. A ground swell—I mean the swell at bottom—is also troublesome, for it'll swing a man to and fro to a distance of seven feet and more. But this is only on deck. It's quiet enough in the hold.”

“ Suppose such a swell should dash a diver against anything ? ”

“ It wouldn't hurt him, sir. The dress makes him so light. I have fallen through many a yawn and hole in a ship's decks, fit to break a man's neck and back, you might think, for the depth of it, and have gone down very softly, and have come up again just as quietly.”

“ Can you converse under water ? ”

“ Yes; but very few know how it's done. If you were to stand up face to face with another man each might burst himself with yelling without producing the faintest sound. Now, how do you think you can hear ? ”

“ I cannot imagine.”

“ By lying down. You and your mate must lie down

on your breasts—it must be on your breasts—head to head or side by side, close, and in that position you'll hear one another as easily as you and I can hear each other in this room."

"I suppose the sound is conveyed by the deck or sand, or whatever you lie upon?"

"Possibly. I only know it's true. When I found this out I spoke to another diver about it, and he wouldn't believe me. Well, one day we happened to go down to a wreck together. I told him beforehand what position to put himself in; and, after we had been at work some time, we came together and both laid down, as agreed; and I said, 'Jim, are there many more casks left in the forehold?' 'Heaps,' he answered right off. 'And so you can hear me?' said I. 'Ay,' he answered, 'wonderfully plain;' and with that he laughed, and so did I, and we both heard each other's laugh just as we heard each other's words."

"How deep down were you at the time?"

"In about eleven fathoms."

"In what positions do you usually find wrecks lying when you go down to them?"

"In all positions—on their bilge, on their broadside, on a level keel, straight up and down as if they were in a dry dock."

"It must be difficult work," said I, "to enter the hold of a wreck lying on her broadside."

"It is," he answered. "We're often obliged to cut a hole in her side. There's nothing to be made of a deck all aslope like the side of a house."

"What are the worst wrecks to deal with?"

"Why, vessels which have been blown up and shattered by blasting charges with the idea of clearing them out of the road of navigation. There was the

*British Navy.* She was a big ship, and drove across another in the Downs and foundered. The Trinity House people tried to blow her up with her cargo in her, and made a pretty mess of the job. But they did enough damage to make her about the nastiest wreck I ever had to do with, I mean for the fragments of stuff sticking about her. Her cargo was worth a large sum of money, something considerably over a hundred thousand pounds, and what we got for salving it was four pounds a week a man, and a pound every time we went down."

"Did you find any dead bodies in that vessel?"

"Only one; it was a trunk without a head."

"What did you do with it?"

"Well, I felt over it, and discovering what it was I shoved it out of the road."

"Have you ever been down to a very old wreck?"

"No, sir; but I remember once going down after a fisherman's trawl and finding myself close to a wreck that I should think, from the shape of her, must have been a hundred years old, and therefore have lain there all that time. I could just dimly make out the green ribs and the timbers covered with barnacles and weed, and I don't know what else."

"And all the wealth that lies at the bottom of the sea—the ingots, doubloons, pieces of eight, the cases of minted money, and the like—have you ever come across a little of it?"

He laughed, and answered, "No; but I've sometimes had the job given me of recovering money out of sunken ships. A case happened the other day. A vessel homeward bound foundered in shallow water. The captain and his wife had been married just before they came away from New Zealand, and the lady had a bag containing money and jewels, in all of a value of about five

hundred pounds. I went down to look for this bag. I groped about, but never seemed to come across the right cabin. First it would be the pantry, then perhaps the mate's berth, and so on. I came up for a plan of the ship's interior, and thoroughly studied it; the captain's cabin was pointed out to me, and I was told that the bag hung on a peg beside the door. I heard at this time that there was a talk that the bag had been stolen by another diver, and this made me the more anxious to find it. Well, I went down again, and after a bit felt my way to the cabin I wanted, and put my hand up to the peg, but there was no bag hanging on it. Then, thought I, perhaps it fell to the deck when the ship went down, and so I stooped and groped, and presently, sure enough, I touched it. It was locked, and when I came up, and the people saw the bag in my hand, they cheered heartily over the proof of the suspected diver's honesty."

My friend is a square, stout, red-faced man, with a keen eye, and an expression of countenance that indicates great intrepidity and resolution. He told me he was afraid of nothing, and he was the only man I had ever heard say that whom I was willing to believe. Once, when in the midst of some diving operations, he was seized with an agonizing attack of the gout in both feet; yet sooner than forfeit the money he was earning, he, with assistance, dressed himself in his apparatus, got a man to put on his weighted shoes for him, and when ready, was, at his own request, thrown overboard, being unable to stand so as to jump over the side, or descend the ladder. Such qualities as an incident of this kind illustrates a man needs who is a diver. The life is one of great hardship and exposure, as may be supposed when I say that a diver may go down on a winter's day, and pass hours under water, when the air is thick with snow,

and when the temperature is so low that the deck of the vessel on the surface is slippery with ice. It is also a laborious life, for there is a great deal of very hard work to be done in breaking out submerged cargoes and slinging heavy articles. But chiefly is it a perilous life. It needs but a very little accident to leave the diver dependent upon the ninety seconds of air he has in his dress and helmet; and if he cannot help himself in that time he is a dead man. So numerous, indeed, are the risks, so horribly quick is death when it happens, that it is not a little wonderful that men can be found willing to earn a few pounds a week whenever a job is given—and this is not very often—by hazarding their lives in deep water and amid the jagged ruins and lacerating and wounding protuberances of wrecked ships.



## *A GROWLER.*

I AM not acquainted with any kind of seafaring man whose company is more amusing and interesting than the old grumbler or growler who, whether he has given up the sea or not, only thinks of it in reference to those days long past when he was young and went a-sailing for pure love of ships and the ocean. In the opinion of such a man, whatever is old is good, whatever is new is bad; everything that went on in his day was right, and everything that goes on now is wrong. I have conversed with several of these elderly chaps in my time, and have been struck by the discovery that they all of them carried the same sort of expression upon their faces. In lineaments, complexion, whiskers, manner of wearing their hair—when they had any—and so forth, they were as unlike one another as men commonly are; but I noticed in their wrinkled mouths and mahogany brows a sourness of expression that was quite a family likeness in its way. There is no doubt that of all classes sailors, in a professional sense, are the most conservative. I say in a professional sense, for they take little or no interest in politics, even in legislation that directly affects their calling, and I am pretty sure that it is not until they quit the sea and settle down ashore that they give any

heed to the reports of what goes on in the Houses of Parliament. But in their own vocation they like the old, and stick to it tenaciously, and when they have to give it up they speak of it as something to be bitterly lamented. I think these prejudices may be accounted for by the circumstance that until the introduction of steam the mercantile marine went on year after year with but very little change. Ships grew bigger, but substantially rigs, routine, discipline, and so forth, remained the same; and, spite of the revolution wrought by steam, our sailing vessels are still much as they used to be, though the larger ones among them be built of iron instead of wood. In the Navy the change amounts to a complete revolution; new rules are frequently being issued in the Army; there is a constant shifting of habits and practices in other callings; but an old merchant sailor who has passed all his life in sailing vessels, and whose last voyage—the last he ever took—was made in a sailing ship, looks backwards and sees but little change worth noticing. Ships had more beam, perhaps, when he went to sea than when he gave up the life, and there were no double-yards for a long while after he had become a mariner; but beef and pork were eaten all through, crews slept in forecastles or deck-houses, the captain always walked on the weather side of the quarter-deck, and the chief mate regularly headed the port watch; wages were earned by the month, a sailor invariably had to sign articles, the main royal was never anywhere else than over the main topgallant-sail, and it was generally found that the steeve of a bowsprit depended a good deal on the bluffness of a ship's bows. Such invariability inevitably tends to make men professionally conservative. It has made mercantile Jack so. He casts his thoughts back and discovers that his great grandfather when at sea did pretty much as he him-

self did; and so any proposed change finds him sulky and hostile; for, according to his own expressive language, "What wor good enough for real sailors; what wor proper to help 'em to sail round the world with, to show 'em where ondiscovered lands was, and to drive such a trade as made Great Britain the richest country on the face of the airth, ought to be good enough for the scow-bankers who, I onderstand, is now shipped as able and hordinary seamen for the purpose of carrying on the work of the vessel."

I met with a curious sample of what sailors themselves would term "a growler" a few days ago. He holds a waterside post, and I fell into talk with him through my taking shelter in the little watch-house or office he uses when on duty. I learnt that he had first gone to sea when a mere lad, at which time he was apprenticed to a collier.

He was now, he said, "height-and-sixty year of age," and had "knocked off" just ten years before. "Not, sir, because I wasn't willing to keep all on, for the sea's been my home for years, and, hard as the life is, yet I love it, and would have stuck to it till I'd died and found a proper burial-place in my hammock over the side; but because the capt'n I had made five woyages with told me one day that I had growed into an old fool, and was only fit to sarve as cook's mate—a berth, he says, as required no brains. He was in a passion, and was afterwards sorry; but his words struck. They worked a kind o' sore up in my mind, and when I left that ship I gave up the sea for good."

I watched his eyes staring dimly past me as he said this; he then gave his face a rapid stroke down with his rough hand, and felt in his trousers pockets for his pipe. There had been a momentary mellowing of the sour

countenance till he had swept the expression off it with his hand. He was now again wearing the look which I have described as being a sort of family likeness among old grumbling seamen of the pattern I confronted. I particularly enjoy the society of such men, but I could not be positive yet—though I should have been disposed to bet upon it—that this was one of them; so to test him I said artlessly, with a careless glance through the door, as though I barely heeded my own question, “I suppose sailors haven’t changed to the extent that landsmen say since you went to sea?”

“Who says they haven’t?” he exclaimed sharply, with an excited toss of his head to bring his eyes to bear on me. “Change! Why it’s so complete that it’s like what the old gentleman as died the other day says of mankind—that we all came from apes—only in the case of sailors it’s the mariners of my time as was men, and it’s their descendants who’ve been converted by the hoperation of time into monkeys.”

“But why do you consider that seamen in your day were so very much better than sailors are now?”

“That’s easily answered,” he exclaimed, with an acid smile. “The reason is because they was—that’s why. In my time a seaman was a man as knew his work. He’d been apprentice, he’d gone through the mill, and whilst in it was ground in proper A 1 fashion. If he had to keep a look-out he’d skin his eyes and instantly perceive whatever there was to watch for. If it was a reef top-sail job he’d race for one or t’other of the earrings; there’d be no hanging back. Whatever he did he did with a will. When the scuttle was thumped ye’d never find him waiting to grease his hair an’ put on a tail coat afore rushing on deck. There was never no need for the mate to see everything clear, for the sailor of my day

was a man who'd think it a part of his business to go from pin to pin and observe that everything was ready to let go in a hurry. He could steer too, and that's saying a good deal, let me tell you. You couldn't set him to a job upon the rigging that he wasn't fit for. If the carpenter ailed he could take his place. If the sail-maker failed he could do his work. He knew every part of a ship from the main truck to the keel, and from the stern post to the flying jibboom end. In short," said the old man, striking a match, "the sailor of my day was a seaman."

"And what is he now?" said I.

"Why, it's impossible to describe him. The only part of the sea he keeps in hand seems to me to be its wices. But even the wices he has haven't got the generosity they had in my time. When Jack got drunk in my day, and skylarked and cut capers ashore, the money he spent was his own airnings, and he was liberal in his drink and was thought an amusing chap, specially when he danced. But now they get drunk on money they've stolen from the owners by sueing 'em for wages they haven't properly airned, and instead of being hearty and jolly, they're quarrelsome and will out knives as if they was Spaniards. Ay, they're poor creatures. Taking 'em all round, they're poor creatures."

"But what is the cause of all this marvellous change?" said I, much amused by this prejudiced old fellow, whose views were more extravagant than I had dared to hope.

"I'll tell yer," he answered. "It's steam. There's no getting away from it—it's steam. In the days of canvas the sailor was put first; now he's second. The abilities that was in demand in my day are no longer required; any pierhead loafer or turnpike scaramouch can drag

upon a warp or shove a ladder over the side; and so the likes of such men are shipped. The quarter-deck and fore-castle have gone into the engine-room, and it's there where ye'll find all the cheek and the good pay. Here, for instance, they'll give a chief mate £9 a month, while the chief engineer in the same ship's getting £18; and they'll give the second mate £7, when the second engineer's a-getting £12. All who are in the engine-room get much better pay than those who are on deck, though it's these who are 'sponsible for the ship's safety, and who stand to lose—not their berths, master, but their living, if anything goes wrong and they're brought up."

"There is a deal of truth in what you say, no doubt," I remarked; "but still you must admit that long strides have been taken in the way of improvements since you first went to sea."

"What improvements?" he cried, sharply. "Speed, I allow—due to steam. But what other improvements?"

Finding me silent, for I really could not immediately hit upon anything to name, he proceeded in his tartest manner, "Are compasses better than they used to be? lights? the lead? method o' signalling? sextants? barometers? pumps?"

"Yes," said I, "pumps are better."

"Better," he growled, "what do they do? what do they keep afloat? Ye read of the launch of a steamer: she's fitted with pumps which discharge the Lord alone knows how many tons an hour; the next thing you hear is she was in collision, and went down in five minutes, with the pumps aworking and all the passengers in their bedclothes, not having had time to rush out of their cabins! And ye say these here patent consarns are better than the old wee-gees, and brakes, and fly-wheels!

Why, sir, those old-fashioned pumps kept ships afloat through whole voyages; but how many vessels have the new-fangled patents prevented from going to the bottom, I should like to know?"

"That is because iron ships fill and sink very rapidly."

"Is that an improvement? spite of bulkheads too, eh? which are always warranted to keep the ship up no matter what she does to herself, nor what runs into her. And you speak of iron ships. Is iron an improvement? What d'ye say to the plates they build vessels of breaking in two if they fall by accident from the trucks when they're being delivered? If that's the material of these himproving times, give me the timber of my day."

"Oh, but you are now speaking of a very low class of ship."

"I'm not so sure of that. But allowin' it to be so, these here low-class cargo boats, which founder by the score through bad construction and other causes, take the place of sailing cargo vessels which didn't founder, but which kept afloat for years; and so," said he, with a face of acrid triumph, "Where's the improvement?"

"We've improved in respect of safety; take the load-line."

"What's the load-line done? Mr. Plimsoll was for making the Government mark the height of side a vessel should show. The Government was afeard, and refused. Certain persons took advantage of the Government's fear, and put the mark where they liked, and risked the consequences. A few ships was stopped, plenty o' outcry was raised, the Government got more timid, and it's come to many a wessel goin' to sea as she never durst go if nothin' had been said about markin' her sides. Is that himprovement?"

"Well, we've made progress as regards boats, the number to be carried, and so forth."

"Yes, lashed upside down on skids, so as to take ten minutes to clear and lower if they aren't too long to slew through the davits. Better not talk of boats; I'd sooner hear ye on the subject of pumps. In my day," he continued, "sailors knew that they was men, and good men, and consequently they insisted upon having their rights. I saw a steamer pass only this morning—a well-deck, they'd call her—and she was that deep amidships that, in my opinion, nothen but the bulwarks stopped the water from washing over her main deck, like a landing stage awash at a very high tide. D'ye suppose you'd have got men in my time to have shipped in a contrivance that was half under water in calm weather, and that was bound across the Atlantic? Why men go now is because they're not sailors, and don't know better. If the old race of seamen was to rise up out of their graves, and the law said that captains mustn't ship nobody but them, overloading 'ud stop, for deep vessels wouldn't be able to get men."

"Well," said I, laughing, "it is evident that you have no respect for the marine life in this age."

"Very little," he replied, as if the remark pleased him; "I look about and see nothen to like. There's stowing. It's all done wrong. The stevedore's under the orders of the merchant, and his business is to put all he can into a ship, and not care how he does it either. The cap'n's allowed no control, and so he says 'Good-bye' to his wife and goes to sea as if he was going to his execution. Then there's what they call dispatch, which means murderous hurry. Cargo's chucked into a vessel that she may get away a few hours after she's discharged, and when she's sailed and is in a bit of sea, she's on her beam



ends, with the cargo all to port or starboard for want of proper stowing. And d'ye call the collisions which are happening every day himprovements?"

"But surely, my good friend, you had collisions in your time, remarkable as that time was."

"Why, I dare say we had—two a month perhaps—not two a day, as now."

"But consider how ships have increased in number, so as to thicken the ocean crowds, and by consequence multiply the risks of collision."

"I ain't a goin' to consider anything of the kind," he answered, with an amusingly obstinate note in his voice, "because, if I did, I should be considerin' what isn't true. I'll allow there's more tonnage now—heaps more; in my time it 'ud ha' taken six or seven big ships to have made a *City of Rome* and the likes of such craft. But as to numbers, I wouldn't mind betting that there was as many vessels afloat then as now. Ask old men what they remember of the fleets up the river and in the Downs, and away round up North—ay, and up West too—and they'll tell ye. No; 'taint numbers nor crowding as causes collisions. First of all, it's undermanning; the crew's so short-handed, and gets so tired by the time it draws on dark that, when a look-out has to be kept, the fellow falls asleep. Then it's hurry. Cap'n's bound to drive ahead, and as he dursn't stop for what he can't see, and, as he can't jump the other when it's roared out there's summat under the bows, why, slap into her he drives, and down they goes as fast as iron can sink. Then it's rules. Ay, rules causes plenty o' collisions. In my airly day a cap'n of a vessel got out of another chap's road just as a man prevents himself from running into another in the streets by using of his senses. Now senses aren't permitted to a cap'n; he's got to act by

rules, and so down he goes along with his ship and his crew. D'y'e call all this himprovement?"

"Perhaps not," said I; "but putting aside the amazing convenience of speed which we owe to steam—waiving all such considerations, for instance, as a passage to New York occupying little more than six days in these degenerate times and often more than six weeks in your good old days—don't you think, in spite of much that is objectionable, that some of the improvements effected are worthy of just a little approval? For instance, isn't it pleasanter to see the anchor coming up to the rattle of the steam windlass than to watch the cable slowly and wearily creeping in at the hawsepipe through the shipping and unshipping of handspikes? Isn't there more life and business in the discharging of cargo by means of a donkey-engine than in the dull and tedious grinding of men at the old hand-winch? How excellent, too, is wire rigging in comparison with the massive and cumbersome hemp? And is not the hollow, cylindrical, and exceedingly light but strong iron mast infinitely superior to that length of dead weight of wood you used to stick up in your ships? Then look at all the improvements in ventilation, the clean and capital accommodation for crews, the variety of deck-shelters mainly designed for the comfort of the seamen when the weather is wet and cold, the superiority of the provisions now served out, especially the tinned foods."

I paused, and he stared at me.

"Well," said he, drawing a breath, "you've listened to me, and I've listened to you. It's not for the likes of me to take a liberty, but I hope you'll excuse me for remarkin' that, arter the observations you've just let fall, it's my opinion you don't know nothin' about it."

## *AN OLD SMUGGLER.*

I WAS lately in company with an aged Deal man hard upon eighty years of age, who, after conversing with him for some time, I discovered had passed the greater portion of his life in smuggling goods across the English Channel. Indeed, he had pursued this calling until the smallness or the extinction of the duty rendered it no longer profitable. He talked with a great air of relish of what he had done, and said that, for his part, he never could see what wrong there was in robbing the revenue. "If a man," he said, "chose to buy articles in France, he had a perfect right to get them into England free of duty if he could, so as to make a respectable profit upon the sale of them." He had been a man of adventure in other respects; had been shipwrecked; had lived for fifteen days on a quarter of a ship's biscuit and less than a wine-glassful of water per day; had had the gold rings cut out of his ears—that is to say, the lobes of the ears sliced down to let the hoops out—by Greek pirates in the Mediterranean. I asked if he would drink, and he called for some rum; and on my passing a bottle of cold water to him to mix with his rum he said no, he was much obliged, he seldom took water in any shape or form, leastways with rum, which he had been for years in the habit of swallowing as manufactured; and then

wishing that heaven might bless us all, he flung the ardent spirit down his aged throat and smiled upon me. There is so much romance mixed up in the popular idea of smuggling that it would be natural for any one to suppose an old smuggler must be crammed with recollections of hair-breadth escapes, thrilling adventures, deadly combats, and the like. One thinks of the swagging nautical figures seen in books, with tarpaulin hats on nine hairs, belts studded with huge flint pistols, and murderous cutlasses swinging at their sides. One also thinks of them as manning or commanding vessels of amazing swiftness and strength—such, for instance, as Fenimore Cooper's "Skimmer of the Seas," or the same writer's "Water Witch"—and pierced for a great deal of heavy metal, with which they engage, and by means of which, and a vast amount of terrific bravery, they eventually capture and sink the cutters, ship-sloops, brigs, and frigates of the Navy. But I found that my old Deal smuggler knew nothing of all this.

"If chaps and wessels of that there kind flourished," said he, "it must have been afore I was a boy; nor can I ever recollect," he added, scratching his head, "my father—who was a smuggler two-and-thirty year—speaking of 'em. But then I'm for keeping to what I know; what happened afore I was born's got nothen to do with me. Be it a lie or be it the truth, it's all the same to Old Jimmy, who's content to believe in the sartinties of the seventy-nine year and over he's gone through."

"Will you tell me," said I, "in what sort of craft you used to go smuggling?"

"Why, in galleys and cutters and luggers."

"How many hands?"

"I've known four-and-twenty of a crew to a galley. Sometimes there'd be six or eight hands in a lugger."

“Who’d find the money for the purchase of the goods to be smuggled?”

“Why, to be sure, the parties as we was to run the goods for. This is how it ’ud be: A job’s given us, say, for sixty tubs of brandy. Well, our destination’s Calais. We launch the boat off the beach, and away we go. We arrive at Calais all right, and walk into the town, and buy sixty tubs of brandy. Each tub holds four gallon, and costs fourteen shillings, and they’d give two-and-twenty to the score if we bought three score. The spirit was strong enough to knock ye down with the smell of it, and we could make three tubs out of two, and then have the spirit thirty per cent. above proof.”

“What shape were these tubs?”

“Why, they were like little kegs.”

“Well, and having got the tubs aboard, what followed?”

“We’d set sail and head for the English coast. There was no preventive men in the time I’m speaking about. The coastguards came up later. There was a frigate moored in the Downs, and drafts of her men, well armed, was sent ashore to blockade the coast, as it was called, and these here men were called Blockades. So a Blockade was what a coastguard now is. Well, some of these Blockades was men to be got at—men to be bribed; and whenever we had a job we’d endeavour to get on the right side of one of those chaps, and land where he was stationed. But if that warn’t to be done, then it was a custom to buy a penn’orth of snuff at the grocer’s, and pass quietly to windward of the Blockade, and, when abreast of him, chuck the snuff in his eyes, then cram a handkerchief into his open mouth, and silence his cries, and take his pistols from him and chuck them over the cliff. Arter which,” said the old man

with an indescribable wink, "Jack was as good as his master."

"Did you carry no weapons in the boat?"

"Ne'er a weapon."

"Well, you're coming across from Calais with sixty tubs of brandy aboard——"

"Yes, that's right, and of course we chose a black night to come ashore. The people who are waiting for us have a dark lantern, and from time to time they turn the light on to guide us to the spot. When we see that light we get our boat over, stow her with smuggled goods, and run her ashore. Folks are standing by to receive us, and they sling four or five tubs a man over their backs and fronts, and off they go with them; and that's how it was done."

"Where did they go?"

"Why, to any house where they could be stored. Not far from Broadstairs a house stood on the cliff, and in the cliff under the house was a great hole with a door, and many a time have I passed articles into that hole to people who've carried them into the house."

"What would be your earnings out of a smuggling job?"

"Why, you see, we'd be working for others, and they'd give us five or six pounds a man, and sometimes as much as from seven to ten pound."

"Suppose, through the failure of the wind, there was a chance of dawn breaking before you could land the goods—what would you do?"

"Why, if our cargo was spirits we'd sink the tubs."

"How was that managed?"

"We'd take a length of rope, about sixty fathom, with an anchor at each end. We'd then secure large square stones to the rope and then the tubs, putting first a

stone, then two tubs, then a stone, then two tubs, and so on, and then let the lot go overboard, taking care to get the bearings of the tubs by observation of the coast. If it was dark next night and favourable we'd sweep for them with a creep, get 'em aboard, and take 'em ashore."

"What were the articles run?"

"Brandy and gin, tea, silks, lace, cambric, and liquor," meaning, as I took it, liqueurs, though when I gave this word its proper pronunciation he shook his head, and said, "No, no; liquor, master, liquor."

"Were you ever chased?"

"Often enough. I recollect one job. There were eleven of us in a ten-oared galley, fifty feet long. We were from Calais, and had a full boat. In Walmer Roads we see a mackerel boat, and alongside of her was a man-o'-war's boat, but what doing of I don't know. Well, I suppose they reckoned our appearance suspicious, for the man-o'-war's boat shoved off from the smack and gave chase. We turned tail, and pulled with a will away back to Calais. The men-o'-war'smen kept on firing at us with muskets, and one ball went through the blade of an oar, but no further harm was done. They chased us for two hours, and then gave up, and we put into Calais and rested there. Well, we reckoned upon a Blockade at Reculvers that we could trust, and sailed from Calais for that place; but another man was on the look-out, and seeing us he hails, and then fires, which forced us to pull away. All on a sudden we catches sight of a revenue cutter; she saw us plain enough, but it was calm, and smother me," he exclaimed with a rumbling laugh, "if she had the sperrit to send a boat arter us. Not long after, however, a fiery breeze from the west'ards came on, the cutter set her square sail and drove down upon us. We up with our mainsail, which contained

about a hundred yards of canvas, and though the cutter was close upon us before the breeze fetched us, yet the moment the galley felt the wind off she went like a comet, giving the cutter no more chance than a billyboy would have in chase of a passenger steamer. She fired at us several times; but it was no good, and in a short time we were snug and safe in Gravelines."

"Does any smuggling still go on?"

"Well, down our way there's a little; but only a little. I heerd a lightsman not long ago say that again and again, when aboard the lightship, he'd noticed galley punts come alongside, so as to conceal themselves, and he'd see the men in them pull off their shirts and breeches, and turn to and plaster themselves o'er with cakes of tobacco and cigars, and then dress themselves again and sail away home. They'd get these things out of ships in the Downs; but as to the old kind of smuggling, it's all dead and gone, for it's no longer worth while. Ah!" he exclaimed, suddenly kindling; "we had some rare dodges among us in my time. One was having stays made with two tiers for holding tea, silk, and so on. A boat 'ud sail across to a French port and get these stays filled. Then a man with three or four women along with him would meet the boat, take the stays from her, get behind some vessel so as to be hid from the shore, and then the women would put on the stays. This 'ud go on week arter week, month arter month; and many's the time I've rowed out my own mother and sisters for that job."

"How many years ago are you speaking of?"

"About fifty. Another dodge was using the holes in the cliffs. There was a hole," said he, grinning, "near Margate with a door to it. On one occasion we hauled the boat up to store goods in that there hole. Afore we



could get through it came on daylight, and to save ourselves from being detected we dragged the boat into the hole, got in ourselves, and there we laid till the following night, doing middling well on some rum we had and bread and cheese."

"Were these holes natural or made on purpose?"

"Made on purpose. Some was tremendous deep. A good many of 'em had doors that locked. Another dodge I recollect was this. A galley 'ud go across to Calais, say; by-and-by a lugger 'ud follow, pretending that her object was mackerel fishing. She shoots her nets, and whilst riding t'em the galley comes alongside. I remember one of many cases I was concerned in. The galley brought us sixty bales of tea, each bale weighing sixty pounds. We snugged all this away under a tarpaulin, and then hauled in our nets, which we found full of fine mackerel. Well, we sailed home. There were coastguards, then, for I'm now talking of a later time. A coastguard came down to see what we had, and, spying the fish, asked us to sell him a shilling's worth. 'Pooh, pooh,' says we, 'a shilling's no good to us, man; here's a dozen for naught.' He took 'em thankfully, and walked off. You may reckon it wasn't long before we had that cargo ashore."

"A narrow shave, certainly. What was the value of tea in those days?"

"Well, I'll tell you a story in answer to that question. Father and me and some others was cruising about after a job, when we saw something lying on the water. A smuggling craft had been chased the night afore, and father, guessing what it was that we'd sighted, sings out, 'There's a dead man.' When we come up with it we found it was a bale of something, and father, arter squinting at it, says, 'Tea, or I'm my grandmother.' One

of the others says, 'What shall we do with it?' 'Why, get it aboard, of course,' says father; and when that was done I pulled out a knife and cut a bit of the casing to make sure of what was inside. The first cover was canvas, then came oilskin, then came canvas again, then oilskin, then canvas, so that not a thumb-nail's depth of water had got into the tea. There was sixty pounds of it, and we made five shares. When we got it ashore I went into a public-house for a glass o' yale and showed the landlady a pound of the tea, and asked her if she'd buy it. She said, 'Yes.' I says, 'How much will you give?' 'Eleven shillings,' says she. So I let her have it for eleven shillings, which I'm inclined to think was cheap as prices for tea then was. But eleven shillings I got for that there pound from a woman who knew values pretty nicely."

"But were there no fights? If a cutter overhauled one of your luggers did you make no resistance?"

"I don't recollect anything of the kind. We looked upon ourselves as 'spectable and peaceable traders. We went on our voyages without arms. If we were chased, well, we'd try all we knew to get away, and often succeeded; if we was caught, well, we'd have to submit to whatever punishment they'd give us. As I've already told you, what happened afore my time I don't know nothen about; all I can explain is what smuggling was like fifty years ago among us Deal men; and I've never yet heard of any other part of the coast where more of it was carried on than 'twixt the two Forelands, including that bit of a bight there past Sandwich, called Pegwell Bay."

The stubbornness with which the old fellow resisted my suggestions that there ought to have been more of romance and bloodshed in his old calling than he had

represented, improved my opinion of his credibility. A less veracious man, perceiving my prejudice—the fruit of reading nautical works of a certain type when a boy—would have consented, perhaps, to humour me to the extent of inventing several bloody contests in which he had been wounded, and narratives of preventive men hurled by massive smugglers in cocked hats and top boots over cliffs some hundreds of feet high. But my old companion smoked his pipe doggedly, and declined to relate anything but what he knew, being evidently one of those phenomenal people who “would not tell a lie for no man.” I asked him how he now got a living. He answered that he received five guineas a year for looking after some stores, and that for the rest of his subsistence he was dependent upon the parish. He had, he told me, besides his working clothes, two good suits, and he appeared peculiarly grateful to Heaven for the possession of a tall hat, which, he said, enabled him to go abroad as a gentleman whenever he left Deal to pay a visit, which, so far as I could gather, happened about once in ten years. When I asked him if his conscience ever pricked him for having defrauded the revenue, he withdrew his pipe from his mouth and stared at me with so much slowness of astonishment, that it seemed to me almost five minutes before his mind had developed the full extent of the wonderment my question had raised in him. He then expressed himself with so much contempt of the revenue, and inveighed with so much heat against the “authorities” for “finin’ and lockin’ poor men up for buying goods on one side o’ the water and striving to get a respectable living out of them on the other side,” that in order to divert his mind from the irritating subject, I felt it necessary to order another glass of rum for him.

## *FROM A TOP WINDOW.*

I HAVE been spending some time on the coast, and a good many hours of it have I passed at the top window of a house in which I lodged, a house tall of itself, situated on the summit of a pretty good height of cliff, that gave me a view of the Channel from long past the South Foreland to as far north-east as the glaring chalk that bulges out to the westward of little Broadstairs. I understood that there were bands of music playing nearly all day long at some of the towns and ports in the neighbourhood; but no distraction of that kind came between me and nature. Music is a charming diversion, but I am of those who declare that they like it only when they want it. When I desire to have my soul moved, I pay sixpence, a shilling, half a guinea, to hear a concert or the likes of that, as Jack says; but it is not constantly that my soul requires such stirring as comes from fiddling and singing, and more particularly from the music of the streets; I may want to put my mind into a bit of moonlit, dreamy distance; I may want to mark the wonderful hues of the sea under a strong wind and dancing sunlight and driving bodies of vapour; and I say it is a coarse, severe trial to nerve and intellect at such a time, to be invaded by the jarring, metallic, rasping noise of a band of music somewhere a quarter of a mile distant to wind-

ward, with a drum in it, which one hears best and most. The tunes played may be all very well in their way, but you don't want them ; you are not in the mood for them ; they run foul of your fancies, mix themselves up with the moonlight, with the rich silence coming off the summer sea, with every tender or sparkling beauty the eye lights on, until Nature herself partakes of the vulgarity of the inspirations of those shore-going strains, with their melancholy suggestions of eye-glasses, shirt-fronts, excited orchestra leaders, violoncello players with enflamed faces, equatorial atmospheres, and so forth, and you are forced to make your conge to the moon, or whatever the beauty may be until the adjacent band is refreshing itself at the public-house, and the niggers, and the piano organs, and the one-eyed tenor have gone home to dinner or to supper.

From my top window all the music I heard came from the breaking of the surf a long way down beneath me. This was the right kind of melody to run to one's thoughts when one looked out to sea. It fitted every mood. It was harsh and thunderous when the surges were rolling, white and livid, miles out, and making every fabric of steam that drove through them, head to wind, plunge its way along through storms of snow ; it was soft and creamy as the sleepy purr of a cat, when the breathless deep slumbered under the violet sky, with a surface and distance as vague and mysterious in their haze and still gleamings, as the cloudless and radiant softness of the dome whose glorious hue is mirrored ; it had a cheerful, hearty, even joyous note when the clear, fresh breeze swept a flashing green into the expanse of the sea, and set every craft upon it bowling merrily along, with sails lifting white to the sun, and the heaving emerald under each fore-foot melting into dazzling froth

as it swept along the wet sides and streamed its liquid glittering silver over the slants of the chasing folds astern. I preserve some pleasant recollections of what would be called the "views," to be had from this top window near the Downs. One I recall with delight. It was evening; the sunset was still red and ardent in the west, and all along the eastern seaboard the reflection of it hung in a dim, pinkish haze. The sea was like a sheet of ice, unsullied by the faintest catspaw, though there were windings of currents here and there which, without ruffling the burnished surface, darkened it with the deeper tints of their streaks. On the other side, the coast of France, hove high by refraction, stood clear-cut upon the faint orange haze over the sea-line with a tremble of whitish light betwixt its base and the water. Now and again a twist of the telescope would bring a buoy into the lens leaning with the tide, and a thread of rippling eddies and bubbles breaking away from it in a wake that disfigured the beautiful light upon the polished surface for nearly a cable's length. There were twenty or thirty vessels of all sorts anchored in the Downs, every craft with its own tall or short shadow hanging with tints reflected under it; for I took notice of a profounder placidity in the sea where those ships lay than was visible elsewhere; it was like highly polished steel in its mirroring power; the light of the sunset had lifted off it, and the colour was of a most delicate green; but the spars of the vessels were still tinged with the westering and fading glory. Here and there you would catch a line of gilt in some well-greased mast, or a red sparkle off a bit of bright brass, or a pinkish glitter in some cabin window or skylight; and all this was repeated by the pale green surface on which the ships lay as though they were embedded in liquid glass, along with

the square yards and the white canvas stowed on top of them, and the black lines of shrouds and the differently steeved bowsprits forking out like the feelers of blind marine creatures pausing in their progress of groping.

I watched a coaster in ballast—a topsail schooner with a round, black hull—sneaking to the westwards on the tide till the slack came, and, there not being so much air as would waft a feather off a ship's rail, she let go her anchor. It was strange to see the cable, through the glass, slipping out in a twinkling of links from the hawsepipe, and yet hear not the faintest sound of it. This is one of the curiosities of the telescope, I think. I have brought the lenses to bear upon men's faces a good distance off, and have made a study of their animated expressions, the movements of their lips as they talked eagerly, their smiles and frowns and the rolling of their eyes often turning full upon mine with a stare that I have found startling. It is curious, I say, to note all this, and have the people within reach of your hand, so to speak, and yet hear nothing. Well, the coaster brought up with her topgallant halliards let go and her main tack roused up, and there she hung in the middle of a long pale streak of glass-smooth water, till the gloom came softening and sifting down upon her, putting such strange twisting and writhing shadows on my side of her that the pallid gleam of sea on which she floated seemed to become the horizon, and to carry her three or four leagues further away, so that by this twilight deception she looked to be such a gigantic vessel that the like of her was never before known or heard of.

But the gradual gloom soon became general, and all the dim objects fell again into their places; the lights in the Downs resembled a swarm of fireflies, and far out in the still obscurity you saw here and there a fixed light

or a red spark that came and went; and far beyond the sands, and upon the very sea-line itself, a tiny brilliant white flame that rose and sank as though it were pumped up; and indeed, when I inspected it with my glass I might have thought that French beacon a fountain of crystal-clear fire, so wondrously did it look to gush up, as though hove high in a solid body of flame. But the moon made the brightest of these steadfast signals hide their heads. She rose an angry red out of a sort of smoky haze that one could have sworn she brought with her, since before her coming the stars went fairly down to the sea-line, and there was not a shadow on the hollow sweep of indigo to tarnish the silver of the smallest of the luminaries. She stood like a live ember on the horizon till her upper limb had jutted clear, and then she seemed to soar with a spring, and under the full orb stood a shaft of gold plumbing the wonderful calm, with nothing but a slip of trembling current to break the lovely reflection, at the centre of it, into a tremulous glittering that made one think it was gold-dust washing off the shaft. The light she shed was for some time too dim to empearl the dusky outlines of the ships in the Downs upon the dark sky; but before long she had changed her gold into silver, and then the little coaster stole out wan to the radiance, and you saw the score of visionary shapes in the Downs, though as she gathered power this changed again, the sky was filled with a dim blue mist of radiance that veiled the stars, and from either side her reflection in the water the sea went away in a breathless black, hiding everything but the lanterns and riding lights upon it. Now was presented to me as beautiful a picture as ever I looked upon. The planet's wake had been broken in halves, I scarcely know from what cause, but possibly



from the flowing of the tide athwart it, and each half took the form of a fan, or of a fountain-cup, one on top of the other, with a streak of silver between to join them. Whilst I was admiring this breathless, bland, and shining appearance, a shadow like a drop of ink stole into the lower fan of light, and, bit by bit, there crept into the sphere of brilliance the fabric of a brig, all sail set, and hull and canvas as black as though cut out of the pitchy darkness on either side the moonshine on the water. Scarce was this apparition fairly centred when there stole in to the upper luminous fan a schooner, that, being some miles further off, looked like a little sketch in Indian ink. Whilst these phantom shapes lingered in each triangular flood of light the sight was one almost to make a man hold his breath for the loveliness and wonder and mystery of this night-picture; for the last quality—I mean its mystery—you felt when you marked the deep shadow out of which these vessels glided into the light, and then saw them melting out of the sparkling field till, the last ebony-like bit of tracery of them having vanished, the eye in vain explored the gloom into which they seemed to have dissolved for the faintest shadow of them.

But the marine shows I surveyed from the top window I have spoken of were not always serene and moonlighted. The gale of wind hath its charms—I mean for the landsman snugly housed and watching the splutter and commotion at sea from a comfortable arm-chair; and from my top window I looked down upon as wild a bit of play as the sea is capable of in the straight-jacket of cliffs and sands Nature forces her to wear in these parts. Ever since the dawn the wind had been gathering in weight, and at noon it was blowing hard enough to prize the head off a whale. The seas came

along high and regular out of the north-east. They were of a dark and ugly green, with glaring savage crests which, ere they fell exhausted, they flung with a mad fierceness to the wind, in a sort of "Take that!" way, as though crazed with wrath by their inability to keep pace with the howling blast and to run as swiftly. There was a kind of pale thickness all along the horizon; but on this side of it I could catch sight of the white, blind, flashing raving of foam upon the Goodwins—something to send a chill through a man's very marrow, for it was a real hellish boiling, though inspected from the distance of some miles; and now and again, when the red hull lifted from the hollows, there was a glimpse to be caught of the Gull lightship. Whew! what plungings and evanishments and reappearances in the form of giddy poisonings! Head to sea she lay all the time, of course, and I could guess how the chaps in her were enjoying themselves, and the diversion they were finding in endeavouring to ascertain which end of them was uppermost, when I watched her mast with the ball at the head of it sometimes leaning over the bows to the angle of a bowsprit, and then with a flying wave of it sweeping over the stern till it might have passed for a schooner's main boom.

But the ships in the Downs! It was there you had to look if you wanted to see what sort of capers vessels can cut at anchor. There were two or three scores of all kinds, and one light lumping barque, with a bow like a billyboy's and a beam about four times less than her length, rolled and pitched so furiously that, tall as her freeboard was, being in ballast, she dipped to it as though she meant next time to go for good and make an end of her fierce and painful labouring. It was a sight to see a surge, when she had got her nose under as deep as the

headboards, strike her square bows when she was in the very act of rising, and wash up in white water pretty nearly as high as the foretop, and then blow aft and down along her decks in a mad storm of lashing crystals. Her scupper holes gushed bright with the constant deluging, and she had as worried, chafed, and strained an air as ever I saw in a ship after a really bad ocean buffeting. A vessel's characteristics come out in a grinding and groaning tumblefication of this kind just as a man's do when hard times fall upon him. There was scarce a tossing, diving, dancing shape upon that stretch of headlong roaring waters, in which methought I could not witness a distinct individuality. One saw it in the pert, defying leaping of the smart clipper schooner, with the clean-painted sides and finely stayed masts; in the reckless wallowing of the grimy coaster, as though she felt that she had long ago gone to the bad and did not care a snap for anything that could happen; in the cautious bowing of the smart green barque that was evidently of Scotch build; in the easy indifference of the rolling and heaving of the large ship whose acquaintance with Atlantic and Pacific storms was too considerable to justify her in taking notice of the popple that was showering its spray over her.

Yes, ships have characters, peculiarities, qualities good and bad; they cannot talk, but they act as though they thought, and thought pretty deeply too. It is true they are the work of human hands, but the ocean gives them life, intelligence, and spirit; and in my opinion there is more nature in them than may be found in animals—more nature, I mean, for a man to study. Indeed, I am not sure that they are not richer in this respect than scores of human beings, for I have known a ship, of her own instincts, to save her crew's lives, when, had those who

had charge of her been able to command their heads and so get their way, they would have sent her to the bottom with all hands.

There was one spectacle I would frequently see from my top window, and I never tired of it. I mean a procession of craft of all kinds coming along from London river and the North Sea, and I am sure I do not know where else, inside the Sands—through the Gulls, as it is called—with a merry breeze from the north and east, and a blue and white sea sparkling like diamonds under the high and windy sun. Who says that the sailing vessel has seen her day? It must be a source of astonishment to any man to take his stand on these cliffs, and witness the squadrons of vessels under canvas which, under certain conditions of weather, pass the South Foreland bound east or west. Many are foreigners, no doubt, but the greater bulk are Englishmen, and of these a proportion more considerable than might be deemed credible consists, not of little coasters, but of large ships and barques and big three-masted schooners and the like, “bound foreign.” There are steamers galore, and these mixed up with the fifty queer sailing rigs make the marine processions here amazingly lively and interesting. First comes a ketch-barge staggering along under all the cloths she has to expand; and just beyond her is a four-thousand-ton ocean steamer sweeping stately along, with windows flashing, and white foam winking along her glistening sides, and a faint thread of blue smoke blowing away abeam of her out of her short funnel; and, as if one contrast was not enough, you get another in the shape of a boom-sail barge slopping through it in the steamer’s wake; then comes a little oysterman of twenty tons making a brave race of it with a light hermaphrodite brig, whose canvas in the

sun looks with its patches as full of colour as the coat worn by Joseph ; then, flashing along with her lee rail skimming black like an eel through the smother, is a large powerful cutter yacht. It is certain that as she goes she can hold her own with even the ocean steamer, and she makes but short work of the deep brig, whose dark canvas leans with a dingy stare at the land this side the snow-like brilliance of the yacht's stately and spacious spread of sail. So unrolls the endless panorama, giving me at one moment a sight of a steamer so deeply laden that through my glass I see the top of the buoy she slowly passes towering above her off-rail, and one shudders to think of the fate of the camel-backed horror in a sea-way ; at another moment a picture of surpassing beauty—I mean a full-rigged ship, blandly inclined by her curved and gleaming canvas that rises tapering from the broad courses up through the double topgallantsails to the moonlike royals. Yes ; from the top window of a house not far from the South Foreland one may behold day after day, hour after hour, a hundred sights to admire, to wonder at, to fill the heart with reverence and awe, to enlarge the mind with fresh perceptions of the loveliness of the summer heaven and sea, of the terror of the grey and howling gale, of the manifold interests of the sweeping, singing, glittering, sunlit breeze. But bands of music, with drums in them, must keep out of hearing, and the negro performers must stick to the sands of the adjacent towns, and the organs to the streets, for between you and the silent or breezy or tempestuous scenes you look upon, nothing must come that brings noise with it, for Nature is very sympathetic, and it is certainly not hard to vulgarize her.

## *DERELICTS.*

I SCARCELY know an object fuller of peculiar sadness, or, at all events, more suggestive of melancholy, than the abandoned vessel met far out at sea. The mind lends all that it has of imagination to it, and the wrecked and sodden fabric appeals to the sympathy with the force of a living thing, maimed and dying. I have passed such an object in the clear moonlight, when no land has been nearer than a thousand miles, when the white fires of the luminary, trembling in the wrinkled ocean, have touched the mutilated masts, the deep and motionless hull, until the deserted craft has stood out against the gush of pearly light beyond like the phantom of a ship, the veriest mockery of something that was once beautiful and proud; and the spectral appearance was all the more startling because, on either hand of the moon's glorious silver wake, the water lay dark, and one saw nothing until the wreck came into the clear stream, and then one could see it plain whilst it passed into the dimness, and melted, ghost-like, in the gloom of the softly moving atmosphere. I have also passed such an object when it has seemed to leap close aboard out of the thickness of a gale of wind before which our ship was sweeping under reefed topsails and foresail, with an albatross in our wake uttering its strange cries as it

stooped to the seething and hissing hollows in search of whatever the mighty share of our keel had ploughed up out of the yeasty green. It was a wilder sight than the other, in spite of the weirdness which night and moonshine and calm will give to ocean things; for she struck the sight on a sudden, coming out of the mist and sleet with a bound, full-formed, and making the water roar in bursts of white smoke over her as she heeled on the gigantic fold and offered the flat of her decks to the blow of the following surge. She was a thousand-ton ship, with the jagged stumps of what had once been towering masts standing up to the height of a man, and every now and again a sea would catch her before she could slant her side to the onrush and overwhelm her in a huge glass-clear arch, whose base on the leeward side was a fury and wilderness of froth; and then you would see her crush her black length out of it, beaten blind, and the white water on her decks flashing off like snow before a whirlwind, until a long springing rush of our passing ship brought the curtain of spume and sleet and rain between her and us, and out she went like a breath upon a looking-glass.

Such sights are familiar enough. Sailors, on the whole, do not see much of interest or pathos in them. "Tell ye what it is, mate," is the cry; "'taint enough that the sea's full o' shoals and hurricanes, and that we've got to take our chance along with shifting cargoes and the likes of such messes; blowed, now, if the ocean ain't a smother of wreckage, and to keep a proper lookout 'ud take all hands in a lump on the fo'k'sle head, one to look aloft, and another to look astarn, and others to keep their sight fixed abeam, and the smartest eyes in the wessel to watch the water ahead for what the papers call 'dirilicks.'"

Well, perhaps there is not much pathos in an object you may run down and founder alongside of; still there may be a little too much of beef and biscuit in Jack's views of things; and it will not do to reckon that all that is worth seeing and understanding may be got at by squinting through the hawsepipes. A certain class of sailor may laugh at me for saying it, and welcome; but my notion is that there is almost nothing more touching than an abandoned vessel—nothing that, being inanimate, appeals more to the feelings. How can a man pass one of these storm-tossed or tempest-broken fabrics without his mind falling to work to construct a theatre of it for the sufferings it memorializes? Look at that fragment of boat hanging at the davits; it was the last of them, and, when the heavy sea that half swallowed the vessel smashed it into staves and left nothing but the keel of it hanging by the falls, the crew knew that their only chance now lay in a vessel passing and taking pity upon them and rescuing them. The water is flush with the main hatch, nothing but the timber in her hold keeps her afloat, there is no food to be had, no water to come at; the mizen top affords a last refuge, for every sea on deck will have its victim, sweeping one overboard, crushing another's ribs, until, black with bruises, and soaked to the skin, and chilled to the marrow, with scarce anything of feeling in their frost-bitten fingers and in their arms exhausted by bitter long spells at the pumps, the broken-hearted survivors clamber aloft and there lash themselves or cling huddling together, with a waste of wildly rushing waters around them, a thousand miles out at sea, the darkness of night coming on, and not a star throughout the long term of blackness to win their thoughts to the Eye that looks down in pity on these poor sailors.



There is no fancifulness in all this. You may linger in an old ruin and vitalize every stone of it with the memory of its history, and then find out that much of the romance that delighted you is owing to the fine frenzy of the poet. You may look at a suit of mail and think of mediæval times, and Richard I. and the Saracens, and then discover that it was manufactured a few years ago at Birmingham. But the pathos, the meaning, the poetry, the story of the abandoned ship wallowing sluggishly and drowning slowly in mid-ocean owe nothing to invention. Too often imagination cannot approach the truth. Why, such things have happened aboard some of those wrecked vessels which shipmasters report as having sighted, and as lying right in the way of navigation, that the stoutest-hearted man might recoil from contemplation of them. I remember once hearing of an abandoned brig having been boarded, and there was found, securely lashed to the foot of the stump of the mainmast, the body of a woman holding a baby to her breast. The wonderful love of the mother was never stronger than in death. The seamen endeavoured to remove the child in order to cast the lashings which bound the woman adrift, but the lifeless arms clasped the infant to the dead heart like bands of steel. For many a day, as it was but too surely understood, had those two figures floated upon the deck of that derelict. When life had ceased in them the rough sailors could not imagine; but tell me of any picture more likely to haunt the imagination longer than this floating tomb, with a mother's love triumphing over the storms and surges of the deep, aye, and over Death himself, the sun rising to make a horror of it, and the night descending to make a mystery of it; and by day or night always the same unspeakable loneliness, whilst

the ocean-air sighs over that spectacle of woman's love, and the water sobs alongside.

As wooden vessels disappear, derelicts will grow scarcer, because iron ships, like Falstaff, have "an alacrity at sinking." I do not know that I ever remember hearing of such a thing as a metal hull submerged or bottom up, and floating about in the road of navigation. This incapacity to encumber the surface of the deep is a distinct merit in iron, but it will deprive posterity of the picturesque derelict. It is strange to observe how, as we grow more literal and severe in our pursuits, Nature herself seems to become more prosaic, as if in sympathy with human views. In olden times the sea was a mighty romance to the mariner, and he dealt with it as a romance, going down into it in fanciful castle-like structures, radiant with banners and gilt, and finding many moving wonders in it of mermaids and ice-realms and leviathans. Now it is a mere space of water, to be measured by the clock—a liquid railway; but its prosaical nature is perfectly in accord with the fabrics which traverse it. Marine romance is cut in halves by the straight stem of the iron steamer, and sinks under the cellular bottoms, the wall-sides, the distressing red and slate colour of the cargo tanks which go shoving along, laden to the scuppers, from one port to another. However, when these abortions make up their minds to be wrecked, it must be said that they go to work very honestly. There are no half-meanings about them, such as you meet with in wooden vessels, which tumble over on their beam-ends, drown or force their crews away, and are met days and weeks afterwards all covered, as the late Mr. Buckstone, the comedian, used to say, "with barnacles and periwinkles." The iron steamer or ship goes down straight.

"On Friday," reports a skipper, "saw to eastward a large schooner-rigged steamer. The spars were apparently painted yellow, the funnel black, and the hull dark. She had a heavy list to port, and showed signals. We had got within four sea miles of her when she twice went over on her side and then foundered. Kept a good look-out for boats and wreckage, upon which people might possibly have saved themselves, but saw nothing."

They will not make derelicts, these steamers; there is no poetry to be got out of them, though this is not to be regretted, for what very ugly abandoned craft they would make! Some time ago the mate of a vessel sighted a steamer about two points on the starboard bow; it was dusk at the time, and she was barely half a mile distant when seen. Suddenly a large empty lifeboat was passed. The steamer was found to be abandoned; the forepart of her was entirely under water, and she was sinking gradually. There was steam issuing from the pipe, a pretty good proof that her people had not long quitted her. Whilst the mate who reported the circumstance was watching her she sunk with a plunge head foremost. Fitted with watertight bulkheads warranted to keep them afloat, these steamers nevertheless do not make derelicts. When their time comes—and their feeble lives as a rule are terribly short—plump they pop into Davy Jones's arms, leaving the imagination nothing to muse upon, and freeing the sea of their uncomely presence. And yet for the sake of those on board of them it is a pity these steamers do not give people more time to save their lives. The *Navarre* went down when there were half a dozen of smacks cruising comfortably around her. The iron sailing ship bound to New Zealand that was in collision the other day\*

in the Channel foundered in three minutes, before the crew could get a single boat overboard. It is a good idea to build ships which shall not, as derelicts, make navigation perilous; but the invention might be improved if these craft were so constructed as to give their people time to lower their boats or make use of whatever life-saving appliances there are on board. What is the good of patent seats which, by being connected, form rafts capable of sustaining forty or fifty souls, when long before the patent seats can be converted into a raft the vessel is at rest on her bilge at the bottom of the water?

Derelicts always appear to me as a kind of ocean beggars. They hover about the path of well-to-do ships, and, exhibiting their mutilated stumps and broken sides, cringe and curtsy for help as the vessels go by. They are, it must be admitted, as a rule miserably poor—in rags and without a “brass farden” in their pockets. The sea despoils them first; but if Neptune overlooks anything of worth, it is pretty sure to be carried away by one or other of the vessels which may bear down to have a look at the wreck and overhaul her. “Found a good quarter-boat floating alongside, got it aboard and proceeded;” or, “nothing to be found on deck or below; looked as if some passing vessel had helped herself to all that was to be got.” Such statements are sometimes to be found in log-books. Here is one that I at this moment light on: “The German barque *Europa* reports, March 26th, sighted an unknown barque; all sails set, and on fire aft; found a thirty-foot lifeboat adrift, which was taken aboard, in which were some tobacco, provisions, and a stone butter-pot.” Doubtless the German enjoyed the tobacco, and ate with relish the provisions and the butter. But often the “find” is a beggarly one. The *Ocean Swell* reported sighting a vessel right ahead with

only a juremast standing. "The cargo was all gone out of the mainhatch, but her afterhold was full of casks. She had no forehatch, but I think her forehold must have been full of casks also. I fancy that she has been loaded with rum and molasses, the rum being stored in both ends, keeping the vessel afloat." She was full of water consequently the rum was not to be come at, and so all that poor Jack of the *Ocean Swell* could do was to look yearningly down at the casks and then, with watering mouth, tumble reluctantly into his boat and row aboard his ship again.

A more romantic derelict was the American brig *Celeste*, the story of which I read with interest in an American paper a few days ago. She was found in the Mediterranean, and boarded. All sail was on her, but not a living creature was to be seen. There was a fire burning in the galley; dinner was set out untasted and not yet cold; there were some child's toys in the cabin, "and a piece of a woman's dress was still under the needle of the sewing machine." What had become of the people? Had they committed suicide by jumping overboard? If so, why was their dinner cooked and served, only to be left untouched? The easiest way perhaps to solve the riddle is to disbelieve the story. But if it be true, it is extraordinary, and should commend itself as a marine problem very well worth the notice of a magazine-writer on the look-out for a subject.

Now and again, however, a derelict is encountered that proves a wonderfully rich prize. Such was the *Falls of Afton*. At about 280 miles from Madeira a French vessel fell in with a large iron English ship, abandoned, and she was conveyed to the island by a French squadron of inspection. She proved to be the *Falls of Afton*, a new iron ship, loaded with 2,500 tons of

railway sleepers, 150 tons of pig iron, 150 tons of smithy coal, and 200 tons of coke—a nice little haul for Monsieur, as the salvage award afterwards proved. It was charged against the captain that he endeavoured to sink the ship by cutting the suction-pipe and opening the sea-cock in the after-peak; but this he denied, and whether it was proved or not and what became of the case I cannot recollect. Encountering and bringing to port a few such derelicts as the *Falls of Afton* would soon make a man's fortune, and if they were numerous we might hear of public companies being formed for the salving of such abandoned craft, with underwriters for chairmen. But they are not numerous, and this age of iron makes them rarer every day. Even when a vessel that looks worth preserving is met, life is often jeopardized in sailing her; or if she is to be towed, then, after a deal of manœuvring and many hours of detention and the carrying away of hawsers, the derelict has frequently to be dropped, with a sea-blessing on her head and a hearty regret on the skipper's part that he ever sighted her. The struggle is sometimes a desperate one. The abandoned craft, like an Irishman's pig, refuses to go ahead. She barely answers her helm. The tow-rope parts in a gale of wind, the wreck drives away to leeward and is lost in the thickness, and the little company of men who have been put aboard of her find themselves pretty much in the same dangerous situation the vessel's first crew occupied before they were succoured. If ever money is meritoriously earned it is by the men who receive rewards for bringing a wrecked vessel to port. It is not very long since that three men were picked up in an open boat in the North Sea by a foreign barque. The story told was this: They belonged to an English fishing cutter, and, whilst cruising, a derelict vessel was

sighted, drifting. The cutter sent a boat with three men to board the vessel, and when they arrived they found her to be a brig. The wind was breezing up at the time, it freshened into a gale, the tow-rope by which the smack was endeavouring to drag the brig parted, and the cutter was blown out of sight. It was impossible to stop aboard the water-logged hull, so the three men got into their boat and they had been drifting about for forty-five hours when the foreign barque came across them. Out of such stuff is the romance of the derelict to be woven; and material for many a wild and wonderful yarn may haply be found at this moment among wrecked, abandoned, and drifting fabrics, over whose deep sides the green seas are rolling in foam, or whose hulls, with the gleam of the black water in the hold visible through the open hatches, lean wearily with the oil-smooth swell, like drowned seamen, whose bodies have escaped from the hammocks in which they were sewn, and have risen to the surface to look blindly up to heaven till decay scatters their dust through ten thousand miles of ocean.

## A BEWITCHED SHIP.

“ABOUT ten years ago,” began my friend, Captain Green, “I went as second mate of a ship named the *Ocean King*. She’d been an old Indiaman in her time, and had a poop and topgallant forecastle, though alterations had knocked some of the dignity out of her. Her channels had been changed into plates with dead-eyes above the rail, and the eye missed the spread of the lower rigging that it naturally sought in looking at a craft with a square stern and windows in it, and chequered sides rounding out into curves that made a complete tub of the old hooker. Yet, spite of changes, the old-fashioned grace would break through. She looked like a lady who has seen better days, who has got to do work which servants did for her in the times when she was well off, but who, let her set her hand to what she will, makes you see that the breeding and the instincts are still there, and that she’s as little to be vulgarized by poverty and its coarse struggles as she could be made a truer lady than she is by money. Ships, like human beings, have their careers, and the close of some of them is strange, and sometimes hard, I think.

“The *Ocean King* had been turned into a collier, and I went second mate of her when she was full up with coal for a South African port. Yet this ship, that was



now carrying one of the dirtiest cargoes you could name, barring phosphate manure, had been reckoned in her day a fine passenger vessel, a noble Indiaman, indeed—her tonnage was something over eleven hundred—with a cuddy fitted up royally. Many a freight of soldiers had she carried round the Cape, many an old nabob had she conveyed—aye, and Indian potentates, who smoked out of jewelled hookahs, and who were waited upon by crowds of black servants in turbans and slippers. I used to moralize over her, just as I would over a tomb, when I had the watch, and was alone, and could let my thoughts run loose. The sumptuous cabin trappings were all gone, and I seemed to smell coal in the wind, even when my head was over the weather side, and when the breeze that blew along came fresh across a thousand miles of sea; but there was a good deal of the fittings left,—fittings which, I don't doubt, made the newspapers give a long account of this 'fine great ship' when she was launched, quite enough of them to enable a man to reconstruct a picture of the cuddy of the *Ocean King* as it was in the days of her glory, when the soft oil lamps shone bright on the draped tables and sparkled on silver and glass, when the old skipper, sitting with the mizzen-mast behind him, would look, with his red face and white hair, down the rows of ladies and gentlemen eating and drinking, stewards running about, trays hanging from the deck above, and globes full of gold fish swinging to the roll of the vessel as she swung stately, with her stunsails hanging out, over the long blue swell wrinkled by the wind. The ship is still afloat. Where are the people she carried? The crews who have worked her? The captains who have commanded her? There is nothing that should be fuller of ghosts than an old ship; and I very well remember that when I first

visited the *Victory*, at Portsmouth, and descended into her cockpit, what I saw was not a well-preserved and cleanly length of massive deck, but groups of wounded and bleeding and dying men littering the dark floor, and the hatchway shadowed by groaning figures handed below, whilst the smell of English, French, and Spanish gunpowder, even down there, was so strong—pshaw! I could have spat the flavour out.

“Well, the old *Ocean King* had once upon a time been said to be haunted. She had certainly been long enough afloat to own a hundred stories, and she was so staunch and true that if ever a superstition got into her there was no chance of its getting out again. I only remember one of these yarns; it was told to me by the dockmaster, who had been at sea for many years, was an old man, and knew the history of all such craft as the *Ocean King*. He said that, in '51, I think it was, there had been a row among the crew: an Italian sailor stabbed an Englishman, who bled to death. To avenge the Englishman's death, the rest of the crew, who were chiefly English, thrust the Italian into the forepeak and let him lie there in darkness. When he was asked for, they reported that he had fallen overboard, and this seems to have been believed. Whether the crew meant to starve him or not is not certain; but after he had been in the forepeak three or four days, a fellow going behind the galley out of the way of the wind to light his pipe—it being then four bells in the first watch—came running into the forecastle with his hair on end, and the sweat pouring off his face, swearing he had seen the Italian's ghost. This frightened the men prettily; some of them went down into the forepeak, and found the Italian lying there dead, with a score of rats upon him, which scampered off when the men dropped below.

During all the rest of the voyage his ghost was constantly seen, sometimes at the lee wheel, sometimes astride of the flying jibboom. What was the end of it—I mean, whether the men confessed the murder, and if so what became of them—the dockmaster said he didn't know. But be this as it may, I discovered shortly after we had begun our voyage that the crew had got to hear of this story, and the chief mate said it had been brought aboard by the carpenter, who had picked it up from some of the dockyard labourers.

“I well recollect two uncomfortable circumstances: we sailed on a Friday, and the able and ordinary seamen were thirteen in number, the idlers and ourselves aft bringing up the ship's company to nineteen souls! when, I suppose, in her prime the *Ocean King* never left port short of seventy or eighty seamen, not to mention stewards, cooks, cooks' mates, butcher, butcher's mate, baker, and the rest of them. But double topsail-yards were now in; besides, I understood that the vessel's masts had been reduced and her yards shortened, and we carried stump fore and mizzen topgallantmasts.

All being ready, a tug got hold of our tow-rope, and away we went down the river and out to sea.

“I don't believe myself that any stories which had been told the men about the ship impressed them much. Sailors are very superstitious, but they are not to be scared till something has happened to frighten them. Your merely telling them that there's a ghost aboard the ship they're in won't alarm them till they've caught sight of the ghost. But once let a man say to the others, ‘There's a bloomin' sperrit in this ship. Lay your head agin the forehatch, and you'll hear him gnashin' his teeth and rattlin' his chains,’ and then let another man go and listen, and swear, and perhaps very honestly.

that he 'heerd the noises plain,' and you'll have all hands in a funk, talking in whispers, and going aloft in the dark nervously.

"In our ship nothing happened for some days. We were deep and slow, and rolled along solemnly, the sea falling away from the vessel's powerful round bows as from a rock. Pile what we could upon her, with tacks aboard, staysails drawing, and the wind hitting her best sailing point, we could seldom manage to get more than seven knots out of her. One night I had the first watch. It was about two bells. There was a nice wind, the sea smooth, and a red moon crawling up over our starboard beam. We were under all plain sail, leaning away from the wind a trifle, and the water washed along under the bends in lines through which the starlight ran glimmering. I was thinking over the five or six months' voyages which old waggons after the pattern of this ship took in getting to India, when, seeing a squall coming along, I sung out for hands to stand by the main royal and mizzen topgallant halliards. It drove down dark, and not knowing what was behind I ordered the main royal to be clewed up and furled. Two youngsters went aloft. By the time they were on the yard the squall thinned, but I fancied there was another bearing down, and thought it best to let the ordinary seamen roll the sail up. On a sudden down they both trotted hand over hand, leaving the sail flapping in the clutch of the clew-lines.

"I roared out, 'What d'ye mean by coming down before you've furled that sail?'

"They stood together in the main rigging, and one of them answered, 'Please, sir, there's a ghost somewhere up aloft on the foretopsail-yard.'

"'A ghost, you fool!' I cried.

“‘Yes, sir,’ he answered. ‘He says, “Jim, your mother wants yer.” I says, “What?” and he says, “Your mother wants yer,” in the hollowest o’ voices. Dick here heard it. There’s no one aloft forrards, sir.’

“I sung out to them to jump aloft again, and finding that they didn’t move I made a spring, on which they dropped like lightning on deck, and began to beg and pray of me in the eagerest manner not to send them aloft, as they were too frightened to hold on. Indeed, the fellow named Jim actually began to shiver and cry when I threatened him; so as the royal had to be furled I sent an able seaman aloft, who, after rolling up the sail, came down and said that no voice had called to him, and that he rather reckoned it was a bit of sky-larking on the part of the boys to get out of stowing the sail. However, I noticed that the man was wonderfully quick over the job, and that afterwards the watch on deck stood talking in low voices in the waist.

“Jim was a fool of a youth, but Dick was a smart lad, aged about nineteen, and good-looking, with a lively tongue, and I heard afterwards that he could spin a yarn to perfection all out of his imagination. I called him to me, and asked him if he had really heard a voice, and he swore he had.

“‘Did it say,’ said I, “‘Jim, your mother wants you”?’

“‘Ay, sir,’ he answered, with a bit of a shudder, ‘as plain as you yourself say it. It seemed to come off the foretopgallant-yard, where I fancied I see something dark a-moving; but I was too frightened to take particular notice.’

“Well, it was not long after this, about eleven o’clock in the morning, that, the captain being on deck, the cook

steps out of the galley, comes walking along the poop, and going up to the skipper, touches his cap, and stands looking at him.'

" 'What d'ye want?' said the captain, eyeing him as if he took him to be mad.

" 'Didn't you call, sir?' says the cook.

" 'Call!' cries the skipper. 'Certainly not.'

"The man looked stupid with surprise, and, muttering something to himself, went forward. Ten minutes after he came up again to the skipper, and says, 'Yes, sir!' as a man might who answers to a call. The skipper began to swear at him, and called him a lunatic, and so on; but the man, finding he was wrong again, grew white, and swore that if he was on his deathbed he'd maintain that the captain had called him twice.

"The skipper, who was a rather nervous man, turned to me, and said, 'What do you make of this, Mr. Green? I can't doubt the cook's word. Who's calling him in my voice?'

" 'Oh, it's some illusion, sir,' said I, feeling puzzled for all that.

"But the cook, with the tears actually standing in his eyes, declared it was no illusion; he'd know the captain's voice if it was nine miles off. And he then walked in a dazed way towards the forecabin, singing out that whether the voice he had heard belonged to a ghost or a Christian man, it might go on calling 'Cook!' for the next twenty years without his taking further notice of it. This thing coming so soon after the call to Jim that had so greatly alarmed the two ordinary seamen, made a great impression on the crew; and I never regret anything more than that my position should have prevented me from getting into their confidence, and learning their thoughts, for there is no doubt I should have stowed

away memories enough to serve me for many a hearty laugh in after years.

"A few days rolled by without anything particular happening. One night it came to my turn to have the first watch. It was a quiet night, with wind enough to keep the sails still whilst the old ship went drowsily rolling along her course to the African port. Suddenly I heard a commotion forward, and, fearing that some accident had happened, I called out to know what the matter was. A voice answered, 'Ghost or no ghost, there's somebody a-talking in the forehold; come and listen, sir.' The silence that followed suggested a good deal of alarm. I sang out as I approached the men, 'Perhaps there's a stowaway below.'

"'It's no living voice,' was the reply; 'it sounds as if it comes from a skelington.'

"I found a crowd of men standing in awed postures near the hatch, and the most frightened of all looked to me to be the ordinary seaman Dick, who had backed away on the other side of the hatch, and stood looking on, leaning with his hands on his knees, and staring as if he was fascinated. I waited a couple or three minutes, which, in a business of this kind, seems a long time, and hearing nothing, I was going to ridicule the men for their nervousness, when a hollow voice under the hatch said distinctly, 'It's a terrible thing to be a ghost and not be able to get out.' I was greatly startled, and ran aft to tell the captain, who agreed with me that there must be a stowaway in the hold, and that he had gone mad. We both went forward and the hatch was lifted, and we looked on top of the coal; and I was then about to ask some of the men to join me in a search in the forepeak, for upon my word I had no taste single-handed for a job of that kind at such a moment, when the voice said,

'There's no use looking, you'll never find me. I'm not to be seen.'

"'Confound me!' cried the skipper, polishing his forehead with a pocket-handkerchief, 'if ever I heard of such a thing. I'll tell you what it is,' he shouted, looking into the hatch, 'dead men can't talk, and so, as you're bound to be alive, you'd better come up out of that, and smartly too—d'ye hear?—or you'll find this the worst attempt at skylarking that was ever made.'

"There was a short silence, and you'd see all hands straining their ears, for there was light enough for that, given out by a lantern one of the men held.

"'You couldn't catch me because you couldn't see me,' said the voice in a die-away tone, and this time it came from the direction of the main hatch, as though it had flitted aft.

"'Well,' says the captain, 'may I be jiggered!' and without another word he walked away on to the poop.

"I told the men to clap the hatches on again, and they did this in double-quick time, evidently afraid that the ghost might pop up out of the hold if they didn't mind their eye.

"All this made us very superstitious, from the captain down to the boys. We talked it over in the cabin, and the mate was incredulous, and disposed to ridicule me.

"'Any way,' said he, 'it's strange that this voice is only heard in your watch. It's never favoured *me* with any remarks. The creaking and groaning of an old wooden ship is often like spoken words, and what you've been hearing may be nothing but a deception of the ear.'

"'A deception in your eye!' cried the skipper. 'The timbers of an old wooden ship may strain and creak in the Dutch language, but hang me if they ever talked good sensible English. However, I'm not going to



worry. For my part,' said he, with a nervous glance around him, 'I don't believe in ghosts; whatever it is that's talking in the hold may go on jawing, so long as he sticks to that, and don't frighten the men with an ugly mug, nor come upon us for a man's allowance.'

"'If it's anybody's ghost,' said I, 'it must be the Italian's, the chap that was starved in the forepeak.'

"'I doubt that,' said the skipper. 'I didn't detect anything foreign in what he said. To my ear it sounded more like Whitechapel than Italiano.'

"Well, for another week we heard little more of the ghost. It's true that one middle watch a chap I had sent aloft to loose the mainroyal had hardly stepped out of the lower rigging, after lingering in the crosstrees to overhaul his clewlines, when he comes rushing up to me and cries out, 'I've been hailed from aloft, sir! a voice has just sung out, "Tommy, jump aloft again that I may have a good look at you!"'

"'Who's up, there?' I asked him, staring into the gloom where the mast and yards went towering.

"'There's no one up there, sir; I'll swear it. I was bound to see him had any one been there,' he answered, evidently very much frightened.

"It occurred to me that some one of the crew might be lying hid in the top, and that if I could catch him I might find out who the ghost was. So I jumped into the rigging and trotted aloft, keeping my eye on the lee rigging, to make sure that no one descended by it. I gained the top, but nobody was there. I mounted to the crosstrees, but the deuce a sign of any one could I see. I came down, feeling both foolish and scared; for you see I had heard the voice myself in the hold, there was no question that there *was* a voice, belonging to nobody knew what, knocking about the ship, and consequently it was now

impossible to help believing a man when he said he heard it.

"However, it was necessary to keep the men in heart, and this was not to be done by captain and mates appearing scared; so I reasoned a bit with the man, told him that there were no such things as ghosts, that a voice was bound to come from a live person, because a spectre couldn't possibly have lungs, those organs being of a perishable nature, and then sent him forward, but no easier in his mind, I suspect, than I was. Anyhow I was glad when eight bells were struck and it was my turn to go below. But, as I have said, nothing much came of this—at least, nothing that reached my ears. But not many nights following the ship lay becalmed—there wasn't a breath of air, and the sea lay smooth as polished jet. This time I had the middle watch again. I was walking quietly up and down the poop, on the look-out for a deeper shadow upon the sea to indicate the approach of wind, when a man came up the ladder and said, 'There's some one a-talking to the ship under the bows.'

"'Are you awake?' said I.

"'Heaven help me, as I stand here, sir,' exclaimed the fellow, solemnly, 'if that there voice which talked in the hold t'other day ain't now over the side.'

"I ran forward, and found most of the watch huddled together near the starboard cathead. I peered over, and there was a dead silence.

"'What are you looking over that side for? I'm here!' said a thin, faint voice, that seemed more in the air than in the sea.

"'There!' exclaimed one of the seamen, in a hoarse whisper, 'That's the third time. Whichever side we look, he's on the other.'

“‘But there must be some one in the water,’ said another man. ‘Anybody see his houtline? cuss me if I couldn’t swear I see a chap swimmin’ just now.’

“‘No, no,’ answered some one gruffly, ‘nothing but phosphorus, Joe, and the right sort o’ stuff too, for if this ain’t Old Nick——’

“‘You’re a liar, Sam!’ came the voice clear and as one could swear, plain from over the side.

“There was a general recoil, and a sort of groan ran among the men.

“At the same moment I collared a figure standing near me, and slewed him round to bring his face fair to the starlight, clear of the staysail. ‘Come you along with me, Master Dick,’ said I; and I marched him off the forecastle, along the main deck, and up on to the poop. ‘So *you’re* the ghost, eh?’ said I. ‘Why, to have kept your secret you should have given my elbow a wider berth. No wonder the Voice only makes observations in my watch. You’re too lazy, I suppose, to leave your hammock to try your wonderful power on the mate, eh? Now see here,’ said I, finding him silent, and noticing how white his face glimmered to the stars, ‘I know you’re the man, so you’d better confess. Own the truth and I’ll keep your secret, providing you belay all further tricks of this same kind; deny that you’re the ghost and I’ll speak to the captain and set the men upon you.’

“This fairly frightened him. ‘Well, sir, it’s true; I’m the Voice, sir; but for God’s sake keep the secret, sir. The men ’ud have my life if they found out that it was me as scared them.’

“This confession was what I needed, for though when standing pretty close to him on the forecastle I could have sworn that it was he who uttered the words

which perplexed and awed the sailors, yet so perfect was the deception, so fine, in short, was his skill as a ventriloquist that, had he stoutly denied and gone on denying that he was the 'voice,' I should have believed him and continued sharing in the wonder and superstition of the crew. I kept his secret as I promised; but, somehow or other, it leaked out in time that he could deceive the ear by apparently pitching his voice among the rigging, or under the deck, or over the side, though the discovery was 'not made until the 'ghost' had for a long time ceased to trouble the ship's company, and until the men's superstitious awe had faded somewhat, and they had recovered their old cheerfulness. We then sent for Dick to the cabin, where he gave us a real entertainment as a ventriloquist, imitating all sorts of animals and producing sounds as of women in distress and men singing out for help in the berths; indeed, such was the skill that I'd often see the skipper and mate turning startled to look in the direction whence the voices proceeded. He made his peace with the men by amusing them in the same way; so that, instead of getting the rope's-ending aft and the pummelling forward which he deserved, he ended as a real and general favourite, and one of the most amusing fellows that a man ever was shipmate with. I used to tell him that if he chose to perform ashore he was sure to make plenty of money, since such ventriloquial powers as his were the rarest thing in the world; and I'd sometimes fancy he meant to take my advice. But whether he died or kept on going to sea I don't know, for after he left the ship I never saw nor heard of him again."

## *THE DANGERS OF THE SEA.*

FROM time to time items of intelligence, extraordinary, tragical, ghastly, and always full of a wild, striking interest, come to hand from the sea. It is hard to account for the peculiar fascination which ocean news possesses. Is it because the bareness and barrenness of the great salt surface gives a significance that you seek for in vain among the throng of interests ashore, to all reports which arrive from its swelling and limitless waste? Is it because nothing happens there that does not catch something of the mystery of the universe of fathomless waters? Not a ship's report, commonplace as it may be, and referring to little more than winds and parallels and meridians, but kindles the imagination as no other plain statement could; and in reading that she rounded the Horn on such-and-such a day, took the South-East Trades in such-and-such latitude, and crossed the Equator in such-and-such longitude, a picture of the sea is put before us. The stormy Antarctic headland is there with its roaring surges and the green acclivities of its giant icebergs; the trade-wind is there, whipping the ocean into leagues of running silver, filling the white canvas and holding it steady as carven marble, and checkering the heaven of the southern hemisphere with swelling masses of trade-cloud; the broiling Equator is

there, breathless under the burning eye of the sun that centres the sky and makes no shadow, the oil-smooth water leaning into the sultry haze of the sea-line, and nothing to tarnish the copper brightness of its surface but a catspaw in the far distance, travelling slowly and fading presently like the moisture of breath upon a looking-glass. These are the inspirations which flow from the most prosaic narrative of the shipmaster; but the deeper magic is felt when he brings home with him some brief and dreadful tale, oftener a hint rather than a narrative, though more suggestive and full in that form than were all the particulars related and the story rounded to completion. The maritime journals which devote the whole of their space to sea matters are incessantly crowded with ocean incidents. Hardly a day passes but that there is printed some extract from a log-book, some deposition before a receiver, some report hastily shouted from one ship to another as they sweep past far out upon the sea, which strikes the imagination either for its horror, or for its wild picturesqueness, or for the curious and startling distinctness with which it defines the mariner's life and the experiences that befall him as compared with existence on shore.

I took notice some time since of a peculiar illustration of what the sailor sees and what he endures, the bitter hardship, the lonely agony, the obscure and nameless end that often fill up the measure of his time in the stormy and tossing world to which he belongs. It was a piece of news occupying only five or six lines. It was brought by the master of a steamer named the *Dora*, belonging to Sunderland, and ran thus: "Off Harboro', Nov. 16, Harboro' light vessel bearing E.S.E., wind E. and blowing a strong gale, with a high cross sea, passed a large raft, securely lashed with ropes, which appeared to have two

or three dead bodies lashed to it, the sea washing over them." You note with a real feeling of relief that it was blowing a strong gale at the time, for in that lies the excuse of the *Dora's* people for not making some effort to ascertain what those two or three bodies were, and whether they were or were not the forms of living persons. When a sailor describes the violence of the wind as a "strong gale," you may be sure that it would come pretty near to a landsman's notion of a tremendous hurricane. In such a sea as a gale of wind would bring up, it is not to be supposed that the *Dora* could have done anything more than roll and foam past the terrible object which had risen like an apparition among the high cross seas. No boat could have been lowered, and, failing that, there would be no means of learning whether life still lingered in the unhappy creatures over whom the seas were washing with that icy edge in them which the November east flings into the gale. But the imagination cannot lose sight of that raft as she passes away astern of the steamer, coming and going amid the roaring folds, and finally disappearing to the sight among the boiling waters. Who were those men? What was their country and what their ship? Were they the floating relics of a vessel that had carried many beating hearts to the bottom with her, and whose fate would never be known outside the cruel barrenness of the word "missing"? Above all, was any one of those lashed and prostrate bodies alive? For if so, the most vivid fancy would be powerless to image the agony of dying despair which freighted that raft as the steamer toiled on past it through the bursting surges and gradually disappeared in the haze of the blowing spray. Many a floating seaman's tomb has been encountered; many a boat holding men whose eyes sparkled with the fires of

famine; many a water-logged vessel in whose rigging the sailors, fastened with ropes, gaped with parched and speechless mouths at the ship that had been sent by heaven for their deliverance; but in its way there never could have been met at sea a more ghastly and saddening object than this raft. The brief, grim description of it haunts the imagination; you see her hove end on up the roaring surge that breaks over her and veils her; you see the motionless bodies tossing on the crystalline sheets of water which thunder over them and leave them exposed; you feel the bitter frost of the piercing gale, and wonder whose children those motionless forms were, and what hearts by-and-by will be mourning over their long absence.

In all pity it may be wished that those men were dead when the steamer passed the raft; for, sweet as life is, yet death itself is incomparably better to a man so situated, whose dying gaze is kindled by the approach of a vessel, but whose heart is made to drop like lead in his suffering breast as the ship goes by without heeding him, and his last hope expires in her wake. The captain of a Swedish brigantine, in a narrative I once read, reminds those who read his report, of the intolerable anguish that is caused to the shipwrecked by a vessel passing and taking no notice of their distress. He had abandoned his vessel in the North Sea, west of Horn's Reef, on the 16th of such-and-such a month, and he adds: "When lying with my crew in two small ship's boats, one already capsized, a British schooner-rigged steamer, black funnel, with white hull and black centre hull, passed us about two p.m. within one hundred and fifty yards, without making the slightest effort to save us, although we had signals of distress up, and they must have heard our cries." It is to be earnestly



hoped that the Swedish captain was mistaken as to the nationality of this steamer, for my faith in the brave and humane spirit of the British sailor is much too high to suffer me to believe that there is any English seaman afloat who would disgrace his honourable flag by an act so utterly at variance with the traditions of his calling. Better suggest that, if an English-built, or even English-owned boat, she was commanded by one of those foreigners who are just now in great request in the British mercantile marine; but if one is forced to accept this steamer as a countryman, then it will be safe to surmise that the besetting sin of the merchant service pursued her, in the shape of no lookout being kept, and that she would have plumped into another ship as calmly and indifferently as she passed the shipwrecked Swedes. Be this as it may, in the narrative of the Swedish captain the terrible mental sufferings imposed upon distressed men by the approach and departure of vessels are displayed; and though no object to be met at sea could possess more horror than that of the raft passed by the Sunderland steamer, the worst part of such pictures of human misery vanishes when it is known that the men were dead and incapable of that anguish, worse than twenty deaths, which comes when, hope having been aroused, sinks and expires and leaves the helpless victim to freeze or strangle amid the crash of colliding seas, and under a heaven dark with storm and bellowing with the voice of the hurricane. I do not doubt for a moment that the master of the *Dora* was powerless to approach the raft, or in any manner to inform himself about its occupants. Yet none the less ought it to be incumbent upon every captain, when the state of the sea renders the act possible, fully to examine such waifs as boats and rafts,

and to suffer no other consideration to weigh with him than the hope of saving life, or the chance of obtaining information that may allay the restless and distressing doubts which for years haunt scores of loving hearts who know no more than that the vessels in which their husbands, sons, sweethearts, brothers sailed are "missing."

Take now another example of sea-dangers. Not very long since the master of a ship arrived at Dundee with a very singular report. He said that when the vessel was in latitude 51 S. and longitude 80 W an immense meteor of amazing brilliancy fell into the sea within a few cables' length of the ship. As it plunged into the water it made a roaring, hissing noise, just as a great mass of red-hot iron would when extinguished. The second officer, Mr. John Veitch, took particular notice of this remarkable appearance, and of the noontide effulgence which the fiery body cast upon a broad space of the sky, and supplemented the entry of the occurrence in the log-book by saying "that possibly some ships that had gone amissing may have been struck and sent to the bottom by such meteors." There is no reason to doubt that, had such a meteor as that which Mr. John Veitch describes struck his ship, it would have swept through her like a thunderbolt. It is right that such things should be made known, for many of the ocean perils are so truly extraordinary and, in a manner, inconceivable, that one would never suspect the existence of a fraction of them were it not for the proper practice of mariners to log down their experiences. The bare possibility that vessels may have been destroyed by flaming bodies falling from the sky adds another item to that long catalogue of risks and dangers which must be confronted by those who adventure their lives upon the deep. The list

is much too long as it is ; and yet year after year new forms of disaster come to light. All the old conditions are unchanged. We still have famine on shipboard, fire, shipwreck on lee shores or on hidden shoals ; but the list has been immensely, I will not say inevitably, increased by the wonderful and, in many instances, the perilous departures made in shipbuilding, and by the ever-growing spirit of enterprise and commerce. Life is now jeopardized by marine risks which had no existence in former times. Collisions there were, indeed ; but they scarcely deserved notice as a peril compared with what has been brought about by steam and the violent hurry of the age and the crowded state of the channels and the ocean highways. There might have been occasional failures of steering gear, but on the whole it was a novelty to hear of ships rendered helpless by the loss of their rudders or sternposts, and drifting with the winds and the seas for days and days. The breaking down of engines, the loss of propellers, the destruction of ships by their cargoes of coal taking fire, disasters arising from overloading, or from weakness of construction or from unseaworthy proportions, or from ill-stowed cargoes—these, with other perils of a like kind, peculiarly belong to our time, and may be looked upon as the supplement furnished by modern science to the evils which grew out of the maritimism of our ancestors.

Indeed, we enlarge the list with such fidelity to old perils that we obstinately refuse even to get rid of the sea-serpent. How long ago is it since that “chimera dire” was sighted by the master, crew, and passengers of the German steamship *Katie* about eight miles from the Butt of Lewis ? It was, of course, “a long, dark object” when first seen, “but on getting nearer it was found to be a sea-monster of tremendous size,” the

portion exhibited above the water being about eighty feet long, from the middle of which projected a moving fin ten feet high. This singular object might have been the sea-serpent indeed. It is to be hoped it was, for it is about time now that that marine wonder was fairly and honestly descried. I fear, however, that what the German captain and crew saw was nothing more than a very common source of danger to sailors and passengers—that is, the hull of a wreck. The “projecting moving fin ten feet high” sounds uncommonly like the description of the stump of a mast with its gear washing about, and the excited imagination of the German mariners might easily mistake the dark outline of a partially submerged hull, gleaming with wet and lifting slowly on the swell, for the coiling body of a monster taking its ease on the surface of the water. It is a pity that the people of the *Katie* cannot be very confidently congratulated on their discovery.

Dangerous as the sea-serpent may prove when he comes, he cannot possibly be more fertile of disaster than the floating wreck. For in these drifting masses you find as serious an item as any that furnishes out the catalogue of modern maritime perils. Such meteors as I have referred to cannot hit a ship once in a million instances; propellers are not incessantly dropping off; steering gear is not always carrying away; but who, in the face of the long list of missing vessels, can conjecture the frequency with which ships strike these partially concealed wrecks and founder as though they had crushed their bows upon a rock? The derelict is a picturesque one and a favourite study with marine painters. There is, indeed, something of real pathos in the spectacle of a hulk slowly heaving upon the burnished surface of the swell; she symbolizes the pitiless fury of

the tempest that has wrecked her, and has passed shouting and roaring on its way across the sea. Black fragments of rigging trail alongside, the swell in sparkling volumes rolls over the crushed bulwarks; and even at a distance is heard the hollow and dismal sob of water in the hold, as though the spirit of the maimed and broken fabric was not yet released, and was moaning in sympathy with the death-throes of its storm-shattered tenement. Thoughts of her as she was in the hour of her beauty and her triumph fill the mind; the imagination re-creates the [towering sweep and volume of sail, the white foam rushing in snow past the glossy bends, the active figures which swarmed upon her decks, or, as they hung aloft, filling the moonlike hollows of her canvas with the echoes of cheery calls. But the vision passes, and instead of that "thing of life and light," the stately laden vessel, there is the mutilated object yonder, groaning as she wearily leans with the heave of the swell; and of all the men and women that quickened her comely shape with human hopes and passions, sorrows and joys, not a vestige remains.

Unhappily, these wrecks are fateful, I might almost say, in proportion as they are impressive. It might have been hoped that, in these days of iron, their occurrence would have been rare, yet hardly a ship arrives in port without bringing news of having passed some of these many derelicts full in the ocean highway. Now it is a large ship, with all her three masts gone, floating on her cargo, and showing in a calm sea a height of about three feet above water. Another day it is a wooden construction, square at the ends, the sea breaking on it very heavily, and, says the master of the vessel who sighted it, "I should have reported it as a rock had not the *Ziba* passed very close." Again, it is the after-portion of a ship,

the stern and deckhouse above water ; and then it is a barque, dismasted, with decks level with the sea. So the record runs on. It is impossible to exaggerate the danger these wooden obstructions offer to the navigation of the oceans. They would have been perilous enough at a time when ships were so stoutly built that they would drive ashore without going to pieces, and linger for a week or more among the breakers as sound as a lighthouse. In these days, however, of iron plates, which crack at a blow, and of water-tight bulkheads, of which the majority yield easily to the pressure they are warranted to resist, the danger of derelicts is immense. They are scattered like shoals over the face of the sea—they are, in all respects, as fruitful of disaster ; but, unlike shoals, their bearings cannot be taken, they cannot be beacons, and their position is perpetually shifting. The most anxious vigilance, the most dexterous eyesight, cannot even in the day-time provide against collision with a hull submerged to a point that prevents the passing vessel from seeing any portion of her until she is upon and into her. Darkness multiplies the risk. A derelict showing four or five feet out of water may, under certain conditions of weather during night-time at sea, be under a ship's bows without her people seeing her or supposing that there is anything near them for leagues and leagues. You need only conceive the resistance which a huge partially submerged mass, with a hold chokefull of timber, would offer to a steamer rushing at her through the darkness at twelve or thirteen knots an hour, to realize the consequences of such a crash. It would be like striking an iceberg, and it is impossible to doubt that many a fine vessel has foundered and carried all hands with her through coming in collision with one of these rock-like

lumps of wreckage which are at all times littering the ocean. It is an evil that ought to receive more attention than it obtains, since to a certain extent it may be dealt with. There are always a number of small Government vessels occupied, like the boy in Sam Weller's story, in doing nothing; and some of them should unquestionably be employed to exercise their guns, torpedoes, and submarine explosives in demolishing these floating dangers. Most ships which report derelicts give the latitude and longitude in which they were passed, so that there need be no great difficulty in finding them. This useful form of naval enterprise might extend all round our island to mid-Atlantic on the one hand and the North Sea on the other, and as far south as the Admiralty might think fit to limit such cruising. The *raison d'être* of the Navy is mainly the protection of British merchantmen, and in these sunken hulls Mercantile Jack finds dangers as large and manifold as ever he need dread in war-time from the privateersmen or State ships of an enemy.

Take now the perils which ice besets the mariner's path with. To be sure it is a great pity that the iceberg should be so highly dangerous, for nothing that floats upon the deep is more impressive and picturesque. Such beautiful objects ought to be fixtures, that they might be sighted, and their grandeur enjoyed without more risk than a lovely stretch of coast or a green and gleaming South Sea island offers. Yet, if the truth must be told, something of the composite emotion which the spectacle of an iceberg excites is due to the element of fear which the spectacle conveys along with its majesty and beauty. Figure a sea shrouded in driving mist and rain and feathery particles of snow; the billows leap out of the thickness as though born of the void from which they curl, combing over in green transparent arches and

breaking into dazzling spaces of foam; the decks are dark with wet, and the ship has a grey and frozen look as she sweeps over the hissing and soaring and trampling surges towards that whirling fog-curtain which ever recedes before her while it closes upon her astern. Suddenly a loud voice rings sharply out of the pallid vagueness of the forecastle; and even as the helm is shifted there shapes itself with terrible abruptness out of the obscurity ahead a huge outline—an object like an island, fantastically covered with minarets, steeples, towers, looming bastions, and cathedral-like forms which vanish in the rushing folds of the pale, rain-swept mist. The thunder of the sea smiting its base, and boiling up in heights of sparkling smoke, awakens a thousand sullen echoes in the crystal caverns, in the gloom of the precipices, and amid the marble-like hills and heights of the enormous berg. As the voyager sweeps past he hears the cracking and rending of ice, he marks the brilliancy of snow upon the jutting points which open out upon the sight with startling suddenness amid flaws in the pouring and eddying mist, and he feels the stinging breath of the frozen mass on his cheek as the gale blows past it down upon him. As the ship runs roaring by the thunder-laden apparition, large lumps of ice shower upon her, and over the rail the green fragments may be seen, coloured to the very complexion of the deep, half leaping out of the swirl of foam alongside, and vanishing astern amid the swoop of the rushing waters. What pen can describe the desolation of a berg so beheld, looming up, as it were, out of space, filling the eye for a moment with its mighty, lonely, and wildly grand conformation, and then disappearing as though its solid and substantial proportions were as visionary as the fabric of the vapour that has enclosed it? No hint of life is seen upon it. No sea-



bird screams around its nodding summit. It is a drifting phantom from a world of phantom, to melt presently and vanish utterly; yet while it stands eloquent with hints of the white and silent realm from which it has floated—a majestic ocean-idyl “writ large,” and rich with a solemn poetry set to the music of the organ-roll of the deep.

No imaginative mind can view one of these lonely presences, these frozen spectres, without recurring in memory to those old volumes in which the story of the early Arctic adventurers is enshrined. The Ice King is a monarch whose romance is fullest of noble and tender fancifulness in the quaint, half-visionary narratives of Frobisher, Hudson, and Davis, and the fearless and pious mariners of their day. One might conceive that the spell of their superstitious and imaginative heroism lingers yet to give perpetuity to those old seafaring fancies which shadowed forth a wondrous world to be found behind the limits of that ice from which these huge bergs drift; a realm populated by creatures “with amethyst and golden antennæ of power and scope to entangle and draw down great ships, and sea-serpents of hideous mien and fathoms in length;” where the Ice King dwells in a shining palace thence despatching the frosty winds on errands of cruelty; where a six months’ darkness of heaven is made glorious by the coruscations of the aurora borealis, and where the rest of the year of ice and snow is illuminated by crescents, and crosses, and vast rings of crimson fires.\* It is curious to think of the impression produced by the first sight of an iceberg on those old-world minds. They were as children, and the sea was a spacious field of wonders. They gave an incomparable poetry to their appreciation of what they beheld, and to

\* The Nimrod of the sea.

them the iceberg would be among the greatest of the marvels of creation. It has long ceased to be so to generations whose ships cast their shadows upon every navigable mile of the ocean. Yet, despite its being full of menace, a dark peril, a standing terror to the mariner, it must ever rank as among the most beautiful and wonderful works of the Creator. View it on a clear bright day, shining like the summit of a cliff of marble whose base is girdled by the deep blue of the sea; or watch it when the breeze makes the sun stoop among the clouds, and observe the alternations of its prismatic radiance, the innumerable diamond-like scintillations of its crystalline rocks, its flashings of rose and pink, of emerald and sapphire, as the flying splendour touches the mass, and kindles it into a galaxy of beautiful hues, and then the fading of all this glory of colour and light into a cold ashen grey as the shadow of a cloud swept over it. Or view it at night when the frosty moonshine flings a blaze of glittering pearly radiance upon it, and makes a delicate lunar rainbow of the whole block, when it looms up in these wan tints upon the silvery atmosphere of the moonlight that merges sea and sky into a luminous void, against which the iceberg stands out like some fragment of astral splendour that has broken away from the heaven of the silent polar sphere. Sad indeed is it that a phenomenon so magnificent should be the sinister thing our headlong navigation makes it; but, perilous as it so often proves, it is beautiful too, and one of those sights which no man who has seen it in perfection is ever likely to forget.

Take now the horror of fire at sea. There is no cry in the English language that has a more terrible note in it than that of "Fire!" Ashore its effect is magical. It is carried from mouth to mouth; from all parts the people

rush, the living stream swelling into a torrent as it nears the place where the sky is red with flames, and where the smoke, throbbing with the play of the crimson light upon it, rolls upwards to form a body of vapour that lowers sullenly as a thunder-cloud over the hissing and crackling scene. But at sea the fearful cry thrills through the senses in a manner impossible to be understood on shore. The eyes wildly scour the horizon; the merest vision of a vessel, a fragment of her canvas, the shadow of the smoke from her funnel, is hailed and blessed as a God-send; but too often nothing is to be seen; the gloomy heaving sea fades into the far distance, and the sense of helplessness becomes an unbearable anguish. What wilder picture is there under heaven than that of a ship with flames breaking from her hatchway, a storm of wind pressing her down, a night black as ebony, seas like mountains of liquid jet, rolling into foam which in the distance glimmers green, though when the surges break near the burning vessel they catch the horrible scarlet of the flames upon their seething brows, and flash over her decks and through her howling and groaning rigging like a rain of blood? One sees in imagination the seamen toiling with bucket and hose, their faces white, their eyes gleaming: one hears the shouts of the officers, the crackling of burning wood, the thunder-shocks of the seas striking the ship. Indeed, there is no more awful picture, nothing in Nature that more utterly defies description, or that brands the mind with a wilder and more shocking memory. It cannot be contended that if drowning is to be the end of a disaster then it is all the same whether death come from collision, or stranding, or fire. If the truth could be got at, it might be found that death is but the smallest of the evils of such experiences.

The sufferings of a lifetime may be compressed into an hour, and there can surely be no hour of agony—for agony it is—comparable to the period spent by seamen and passengers engaged in fighting with flames which slowly overmaster them, far out at sea, leagues away from human help, driven by the scorching heat from one part of the vessel to another, eventually dropping overboard into the frail boats which interpose a plank between them and eternity, and drifting about for days half dead, half mad, and wholly hopeless. The marine records are too full of such horrors not to make them realizable things even to those whose acquaintance with the deep and the struggles and perils of such as seek for bread upon its treacherous bosom is of the most imperfect kind. To the sailors they speak with a trumpet-voice. He has passed the fragment of charred timber rising and falling upon the swell in whose summit the light widens with ever heave; he knows its meaning as a memorial, and can translate to his heart the unutterable pathos it contains, the unspeakable misery it typifies. He has sighted the faint glow over the bow when the night falls, and, as his ship presses forward, the white water washing past her sides, and the rigging full of songs, he has watched the light brighten slowly, changing from delicate orange to the redness of a sunset, until presently the horizon in that quarter seems on fire, and in the midst of the burning sky he sees the clear configuration of a ship ablaze from stem to stern, with the dark specks of boats hanging upon the shining water that stretches around her.

Another peril of the deep is lightning. But whilst this is one of the most alarming, it seems on the whole to be the least fateful of marine dangers. Dana's notion was that a ship, by offering many points to a storm, scatters the electric fluid, and in a sense disarms it. This is a

scarcely tenable theory. At such times, it is true, sparks and flames may be seen running along and down the iron-works of the ship, such as the jackstays, chain-sheets, boom-irons, and so forth ; but these appearances are probably what sailors call "composants" rather than that form of electricity which we term lightning. It is certain that when a ship is struck she suffers ; whereas Dana's theory would prove that she may be enveloped in lightning discharges without injury. A ship in an electric storm at sea furnishes always a time of anxiety. The mind never can lose the sense that she may be the only object on the surface of the deep for leagues around, and that, therefore, she presents the sole point of eminence for the lightning to strike. The mariner encounters many kinds of thunderstorm, but on the whole the most oppressive is the dense breathless blackness that comes creeping up over the oily bosom of the deep in the darkness of the night. It draws up all round, shadows deepening into ebony, with a faint far-off moaning, which the sailor's ear will know how to interpret. The sense of expectation is somewhat qualified in a steamer, thanks to the perpetual motion of the ship. In a sailing vessel, however, this sense will be sharpened sometimes into a feeling almost of suffering. One knows not what is to come, when the storm will burst, whether it will bring up a hurricane or pass in fire and thunder away without a breath of air. Every sound aboard the ship is fearfully distinct ; the chafing of the gear, the tread of men moving about uneasily, the half-muffled whispers of the watch insensibly subdued by the ponderous blackness. A few huge drops of rain fall with a sharp splashing and cease. Then on a sudden the inky heavens are riven by a blaze of violet light, the sea flashes up a dull blue under the gush of furious flame, and the vast

masses of vapour, rising one upon another, may be seen from horizon to horizon. Almost instantaneously follows the concussion of thunder. The boom of it smiting the smooth water falls upon the ear in a single crash, and the mighty echo may be heard rolling away until it dies in a moan, as though it were some monstrous tangible thing making a roaring of its passage as it runs over the black folds of the deep. Once burst, the storm plays in in fury; the whole ocean is lighted up by the ghastly yellow and blue of the lightning, and the thunder keeps the ship trembling. Breathlessly as it came, so breathlessly does the storm pass, the tail of it pouring down rain that fills the decks, and between the intervals of the sullen roaring that has gone clear, one hears nothing but the gushing of the water through the scupper holes.

Lightning in a gale of wind yields finer effects, but the shouting of the hurricane, the hurtling and breaking of the seas, the pitching and floating rushes of the vessel leave the mind clear of the oppression that is born of the breathless electric storm. Not long since a shipmaster reported that on a certain night, in the North Atlantic, during a tempest, he found himself surrounded by ten or twelve large icebergs which were revealed by the lightning. It would be difficult to conceive a grander scene, though the element of danger present probably found the crew of that vessel little disposed to admire the amazing display. A tall iceberg viewed by daylight is a noble and beautiful sight; but one may imagine the terrible splendour of the crystalline masses coming and going amidst the sunbright electric flashes, the sea showing sometimes green and sometimes yellow under the discharges, lifting its rolling ridges into blown snow under the gale, while the flashing from the whirling blackness on high sparkles in the pinnacles and in the

ravines and in the huge overhanging lucent rocks of the bergs, one moment kindling the whole weltering Arctic picture into a wild and fiery scene of rushing waves and clouds and motionless ice-islands, and then letting the blackness drop upon the wondrous sight, to reveal it again to the eye dazzled by the alternations of flame and deepest gloom. For such an experience as this, even a timid man might not be unwilling to dare a storm of wind and lightning at sea. Yet, having regard to the furious electric tempests through which ships are safely brought, Jack's boast that there is more to be feared ashore than on the ocean from lightning, not to mention wind, may perhaps be admitted. It is no question of seamanship. If a vessel is to be struck by electricity, there is no marine skill to avert the blow. The end of the conductor may be overboard; but it is only too certain that it will not save the masts. Special precautions are taken aboard men-of-war on account of the magazines; if less anxiety is shown in the merchant service, it is no doubt because disaster from lightning is among the rarest of sea-perils. Nevertheless, unfrequent as it may be, it is comforting to reflect that the employment of iron in the construction of ships should have diminished the risk to the lowest possible degree.

## *JACK'S WAYS AND MEANS.*

IF an old sailor were to be asked whether mariners suffered, from shipwreck and other causes, in former times more than they do now, I am not at all sure that he would answer off-hand. Many of the old narratives are indeed very hideous reading—full of cannibalism and worse horrors still. To-day there is decidedly less ghastliness, because, as I take it, the oceans are very much more navigated than they used to be; swift steamers are hourly speeding towards all the coasts of the world and into waters which eighty years ago had never been furrowed by a keel, unless it were a canoe's, since the beginning when the sea was called into being; and, consequently, if a vessel founders and leaves a boat full of people adrift, it would be strange indeed if she was not sighted and her occupants picked up before they had arrived at such a pass as to oblige them to cast for lots. Yet there is one horror from which ancient mariners were spared, and that is the sudden sinking of ships. A deal of hammering from furious seas was needed to demolish those massive wooden structures in which John Bull used to go afloat, whether for warlike or peaceful purposes; and even when, according to the old expression, their timbers used to yawn, somehow or other the brawny, pigtailed salts who manned them generally



contrived to keep them afloat long enough to give the people a chance to prolong and often to preserve their lives by lowering the boats, constructing rafts, and so on. But nowadays when a ship founders she goes down with a promptitude that perfectly corresponds with this age of despatch. This puts the sailor of to-day at a disadvantage. There is no human being more nimble at contriving than an English seaman. But he wants a few minutes to carry out his scheme. He can't work under water. Therefore, when one hears about the smartness of the old race of mariners, how in moments of fearful emergency they did this and that and something else with the "wonderful coolness which always characterizes the British seaman ;" and when one is told that the surest sign of the deterioration of the present school of seafarers lies in the state of panic they are usually found to be in when disaster befalls their ship, let us remember that in the days of wood, when vessels were built without bulkheads, and were fitted with brake or chain pumps, Jack, after a fight, a gale, or a stranding, repeatedly carried his "hooker" into port with the scupper holes sluicing out bright water, butts started in all directions, and nothing but a spritsail yard to steer with ; whereas now, when anything happens to his iron tank, plump he goes with her, and adds another heap to the piles of green skulls and weed-clad navies on the floor of the ocean.

The character of the British sailor is not better shown by his courage, his wonderful exploits, his ability as a seaman when put to the test, than by his smartness in grasping opportunities in moments of peril, his capacity of endurance, and, above all, the ways and means he has of bearing up against difficulties which sicken the landman's heart to read about, and of outwitting Death him-

self by an amazing alertness and by displays of patience which seem incredible, though nothing could be truer. Here is a stroke, for instance, that has always amused me to think about. Captain Martin was the commander of an Indiaman called the *Marlborough*. He was chased by three Frenchmen, mounting in all 162 guns. The *Marlborough's* cargo was worth £200,000, and to save this Martin very wisely took to his heels. He contrived to manœuvre and dodge about and keep the enemy at bay till the night fell; whereupon he ordered a light to be placed in the great cabin window, and all other lights to be extinguished. Meanwhile the carpenter went to work to saw a water-cask in two; in one half he fixed a mast of the height of the light showing in the cabin window, a lantern was then secured to the mast, and the whole machine carefully dropped overboard, the light in the window being extinguished at the same time. The French soon came up with this light, and supposing it to be the English ship, and that she meant to fight, prepared for action; but all at once the tub filled and sank, to the astonishment of "Mounseer," who from that hour saw the *Marlborough* no more. There is a deal of quiet dryness in all this; one sees the old captain grinning to himself as he looks into the blackness over the taffrail, and the hard wiry face of the carpenter, full of hatred of old Wooden Shoes as he saws at the cask and erects the mast, and best of all are the exclamations one hears in fancy aboard the Frenchman when the light goes out just when they are in the act of delivering a broadside, and when they look aloft, and over the side, and all round the ocean for "ze dom Angleeshman."

There is another "dodge" on record. One of the most famous ships of the last century was the *Tartar*, commanded by Captain Lockhart, whose valour and suc-

cesses made his name a formidable sound in the ears of French commanders. A privateer belonging to Bristol, named the *King George*, was one night fallen in with by an enemy's ship big enough to have stowed her away in his hold. The captain of the privateer, a man named Read, seeing there was no chance for him, coolly put his helm over, dashed alongside the enemy, and ordered him to instantly strike to the *Tartar*, Captain Lockhart, a command, it is declared, that was immediately obeyed. Promptness, the capacity of quickly forming a resolution stands foremost among seafaring qualities; and not seldom in our English annals has it involved self-sacrifice to a degree that entitles those who have thus acted to the character of the greatest of heroes. The story of James Marr is an example; and it is of too recent date to be forgotten. A pilot schooner was lost off the coast of Australia. The mainmast went by the board, Marr was washed away, but managed to catch hold of the mast. He could easily see, however, that if the vessel was to be saved the wreck must be cut away; he accordingly motioned to his mates to sever the ropes which held the spar to the pilot boat; they shouted a farewell to him, he nodded good-bye, the wreck was sent adrift, and the poor fellow was seen no more. Here, at all events, we have a wonderful example of how Jack's ways and means may include the operation of really sublime qualities. Yet this is but one instance of thousands, not nobler, indeed, but all of them beautiful as illustrations of the sailor's fearlessness, his loyalty as a comrade, his generosity as an enemy. Of his loyalty as a shipmate one of the most touching stories I know is this: An English frigate cruising in the Bay of Biscay, drove past the wreck of a merchantman whose decks were just above water. A boat was sent by the frigate to overhaul the wreck, and

on her approach "an object resembling in appearance a bundle of clothes" rolled out of the deck-house. The bowman hauled it into the boat by means of a boathook. It proved to be the body of a man, bent head and knees together, and so wasted that it could scarcely be felt in the ample clothes it was clad in. It was conveyed to the frigate, where, to the astonishment of all, it exhibited signs of life; it tried to move, and then, in a feeble, hollow voice, muttered, "There is another man." The boat's crew again returned to the merchantman, where they discovered two bodies in bowed postures, dead from starvation. The first man recovered, and we read, "to the surprise of all who recollected that he had been lifted into the ship by a cabin-boy, presented the stately figure of a man nearly six feet high!" But think of a man in such a condition as this exerting his last breath, as it must have seemed to him and those around, to tell the pitying people who looked down upon him that there was still another man—still one of the two discovered whom he deemed to be alive, and whose preservation he could yet think of, though his heart beat under the ribs of a skeleton!

Shipwreck makes but ghastly reading, though the heroism that again and again shines through it gives it such colour and lustre that we often lose sight of the horror of it in the splendour of an action that clothes and conceals all details but itself, in the same way that the glory of the martyr overwhelms and hides from us the coarse and bitter wickedness and all the foul vileness of his funeral pyre. But what renders English shipwreck, in my humble judgment, peculiarly interesting, is the revelation it makes of sailors and the ways and means Jack has of driving ahead through frightful perils, and misery and privation dreadful to think of, and coming

out of them in pretty tolerable spirits, if rather gaunt, and quite ready for another voyage. I am speaking, of course, of times when he had a chance, when boats hung at the davits over the side ready for lowering, and before the Iron Fiend came up out of the sea in the likeness of Davy Jones, eager to give Jack his last toss whenever a rivet dropped out or a plate broke, or the rudder gear gave way. There was the wreck of the *Doddington*. She went ashore on a reef many leagues to the eastward of Agulhas, and broke up leaving twenty-three souls, out of 270, on a little bit of an island with nothing to see but the horizon. How were they to escape? There are many stories of patient endeavour on the part of seamen, but nothing to parallel the patience of those twenty-three men. There was a carpenter among them, and some one suggested that if they could only get the materials there was nothing to stop them from building a boat. They had neither tools nor materials at that time; but nevertheless they talked as if the boat was built and they were ready to make a start; and that is exactly how a body of English seamen would talk, for it must be a hard case indeed before which a sailor droops utterly hopeless. They searched day after day among the surf, and now they would pick up a gimblet, and then a file, and afterwards a sword-blade, and so on. "At ten o'clock they assembled to prayers," and then they'd go on searching till, what with collecting bits of timber from the wreck and odds and ends which their seaman-like ingenuity fashioned into all sorts of useful things, they collected as much as they thought was needful, and the carpenter went to work. It took them nine months to build that boat, during all which time they had painfully subsisted on the stores and fresh water the sea cast up from the wreck, along with fish which they caught, and birds, and

when she was ready they called her the *Happy Deliverance*, and launched her with a loud hurrah. They started in February, and in the following April they arrived in "the river of Delagoa," where they found the snow *Rose* trafficking for bullocks' and elephants' teeth. Here is a romance to please a boy ; but how might it strike three-and-twenty landsmen imaginative enough to figure themselves on a rock in the middle of the sea, and considering among themselves how they should get home ?

Then there is the story of the sloop *Betsy*, which capsized. The captain and another stripped that they might more readily reach the boat that had floated away keel-up. But a third man could not swim, and so kept his clothes. They righted the boat after incredible labour and got in to her, along with a dog and thirteen onions. They had neither masts, sails, nor oars. But the sailor who could not swim wore a great flapping Dutch hat, a shirt (of which a piece was immediately taken to stop a leak), and a pair of wide trousers. First of all they cut up the remainder of the shirt into strips for rigging, then they removed the plank-lining of the boat, patiently cutting round the heads of the nails, and formed the planks into a kind of mast ; the trousers served for a sail, and another plank for a yard, and the Dutch hat was converted into a bailer. Thus they ran before the wind, and thus was afforded another remarkable illustration of Jack's ways and means.

It is the parts which concern Jack's victuals in times of distress that form the dreadfulest portions of the marine records. A vessel was lost on the Northern American coast in winter-time. The survivors after awhile were so put to it for food that they lived upon marine plants, which they boiled. With the hope of making this soup richer, one of them one day popped into it one

of two tallow candles they possessed. The horrible compound—they called it “disgusting broth”—made them all fearfully ill; yet next day they used their last candle in the same way, which affected them as before, only not quite so violently. In the well-known loss of the *Grosvenor* Indiaman in 1782, it is related that when the miserable survivors were wandering along the African coast they came across a dead whale. They had no knives to enable them to cut steaks from the leviathan, so they made a fire on the carcase, worked away at the roasted part with oyster shells, “and made a hearty meal.” There is a dark picture of famine on shipboard preserved in the account of the voyage of the French ship *Le Jaques*. Let Monsieur Lery tell the story himself: “This cruel error” (they thought themselves close to Finisterre when in reality they were three hundred leagues distant from it) “suddenly reduced us to the last resource, which was to sweep the store-room where the biscuit was kept. Here we found more worms than crumbs of bread. These sweepings were distributed by spoonfuls and made a soup as black and more bitter than soot.” Such was the famine among these people that amongst other things they eat were their “leather stocks,” their shoes, the horn of the lanterns, all the candles, the coverings of the boxes, all the rats and mice which could be come at, and, finally, “we were at last reduced to such extremity that we had nothing left but Brazil wood,” which formed a part of their cargo. In the case of the *Wager* man-of-war, the crew’s ways and means of keeping body and soul together are as wild and dreadful in their way as those related by Lery. All that they had among them were two or three bags of biscuit dust. They, however, contrived to kill a sea-gull and to pick some wild celery. The biscuit dust, the celery, and the sea-gull were put

together into a pot, and boiled into a sort of soup, of which each man drank a little; but they had no sooner swallowed it than they were seized with painful sickness and swoonings, and manifested every symptom of being poisoned. They first thought the cause lay in the herbs; then they put it down to the gull; but they afterwards ascertained that the biscuit dust had been stored in a bag that had held tobacco, of which a fair quantity got mixed with the biscuit, and converted the poor fellows' "broth" into a horrible emetic.

The maritime records preserve the adventures of eight English seamen, who were "left by accident in Greenland," in days when a ship up that way might have been reckoned almost as strange a sight as a rose there. These men were, in fact, eight Robinson Crusoes, who built a house for themselves, and performed other wonders to the complete explosion of the saying that "out of nothing comes nothing." Our old friend Robinson was, of course, more fortunate; he was cast ashore upon a lovely island, full of fruit and goats and turtle, and the climate was delightful; but these eight men had little more than rugged wastes of ice to look at, with terms of darkness when the stars shone all day out of a black sky, and the snow stared in dreadful stillness up at the heavens. It is amazing to read of the shifts these old mariners were reduced to, and yet how excellently they managed to get along. They lived a good deal on whales and sea-horses, which they describe as very loathsome food; they repaired their clothes with threads of rope-yarn and needles of whalebone; they contrived to kill bears and deer, of which they roasted a portion every day, and stowed it away in hogsheads (they were left at a whaling station where they found oil and casks, but very little else), "leaving as much raw as would serve us to roast every



Sunday a quarter, and so for Christmas Day, and other such like occasions." They set ingeniously contrived traps for foxes, and by means of a bear's skin with the flesh outside and springs of whalebone they caught sixty birds, which they found to be pretty good eating. I don't fancy that any others than sailors could have managed to fare tolerably well and to lie warm as these eight seamen did on an ice-bound gaunt and famine-stricken land for seven or eight months.

There was another "extraordinary deliverance," as the old chroniclers term it, of four English seamen. They were found by a Dutch galliot on a shoal of ice. They had formed part of a crew of a whaler that had been wrecked, and not caring to stay where they had been cast, got on board a piece of floating ice, in which they cut a hole to serve them as a residence, fortifying the entrance against the keen wind by blocks of ice. In this hole they lived a fortnight, and their only food was a leather belt, which they divided and eat, share and share alike, till it was all gone. An imaginative mind might easily go to work on a strange picture of those four men—there were five originally, but one soon lay dead—lying close together for the warmth of their bodies in that ice cavern, with now one and then another peeping with despairing, haggard eyes through the crevices of the blocks that filled the entrance in search of the help that took a fortnight to come, and whose coming was among the miracles of seafaring life. We lock up our felons and scoundrels in jails, and they think themselves dreadful sufferers to be treated so for forging a cheque, for kicking a wife, or for blowing up a building. But what would the humanitarians, who consider the "cat" a cruel remedy against strangulation, what would they say if our rogues and villains were sentenced to

undergo a few of the hardships which have befallen sailors in their time?

There is scarcely a narrative of shipwreck that does not exhibit Jack's marvellous capacity for what must be called "managing." "We took to pieces," says Captain Boyce of the *Luxborough*, "three men's frocks and a shirt, and, with a sail-needle and twine which we found in one of the black boy's pockets, we made a shift to sew them together, which answered tolerably well. Finding in the sea a small stick, we woolded it to a piece of a broken blade of an oar that we had in the boat, and made a yard of it, which we hoisted on an oar. A thimble which the foresheet of the boat used to be reeved through, served at the end of the oar or mast to reeve the halliards." And in this condition they head through a stormy sea for Newfoundland, though before long we find some of the crew "crying out lamentably" for water, and being deluded by fancies of ships close at hand, and of men talking, bells ringing, and cocks crowing, and then raving and cursing at these phantoms of their own imagination for not coming to their rescue.

But to relate even a few more instances of how the sailor has managed in bygone times and still manages when a chance is given him would carry me a long way too far. There is a story of a seaman having been seen to drop a note into the poor-box. It was opened and found to contain seven shillings along with these words, "The mite of a sailor who was at sea in a late storm, in hope that God will always be with him in time of distress." So far as my knowledge of the better class of seamen goes, I think that that old mariner's act of devotion may be taken as forming a part of Jack's ways and means. His heart will turn aloft in times of peril though his hands and brains may be busy in other

directions. And let us at all events admit that few stand in greater need of heaven's merciful watching than the sailor whose bold spirit and noble struggles with miseries and hardships not to be conceived by landsmen do but increase the pathos of his death when the ocean proves too strong for him or when human greed dismisses him unarmed to wrestle with an element that is only to be dominated by the highest form of honesty in the creation and loading of a ship.

## *A SAILOR'S FRIEND.*

A FEW miles north of the mouth of the Tyne there is a little town standing about a quarter of a mile from the edge of the cliffs, called Whitley. Cullercoats—as quaint a nook as any in all England—is close alongside of it; and away to the northward again, by an easy walk, is Hartley, memorable for its frightful mining disaster, crowning the top of a hill with a perfect constellation of shining red roofs. I stood upon the summit of the low cliff immediately opposite Whitley, looking down upon the stretch of sand that rounds in a semi-circle to little St. Mary's Island. The day was wonderfully calm, the south-west wind blowing lightly, and the only object in sight upon the water was a red-hulled steamer creeping away, with a little hillock of foam under her counter, into the south-east, and veining the soft azure heaven of the horizon with a delicate line of grey smoke. At my side stood a man who had accompanied me to this spot in order to point out the scene of an incident the mere brief newspaper account of which had greatly impressed me.

“See,” he said, pointing to an opening in the cliff about a third of a mile distant from us; “yon’s Briar Dene, and if ye’ll run your eye from it along the sand to that dark bit there close against the surf, that’ll be the place where the bodies were found.”

“How many of them?”

“Ten there, and five more came ashore at Seaton Sluice, just beyond Hartley, that ye see on yon hill, making in all fifteen. And one more body—that of a boy—was found away out at sea. It was a terrible wreck, to be sure; so near home, too, as it was. I doubt if a worse one of its kind ever happened. I have only to shut my eyes to see the drowned faces, sir!”

He turned from me with an involuntary gesture, and pressed his hand to his forehead.

“I should like to hear the story,” said I. “The sailor has not so many friends that an act like this should be hidden. Let us by all means endeavour to keep up his faith in the goodwill of us people ashore for him, though, heaven knows, when once he is afloat, he grows as vague an abstraction to most of us as those misty distances yonder behind which he vanishes,” I said, pointing to the horizon.

“Sir,” said my companion, turning towards me, and beginning the story in a low voice, “there had been a heavy gale blowing that Thursday night, ay, as fierce a gale as any that blew in October last year, when, as ye may have heard, the steam-trawlers that made for the Tyne were rolled over and over by the sea at the mouth of it, and scores of coasters went to pieces like chucking a pack of cards out of your hand. I was at Tynemouth the greater part of that Thursday night, keeping a look-out there; and, though it was pitch black, I could see the ocean for miles, so white was it with fury—ay, if the moonlight had been on it, it couldn’t have been whiter. That was the kind of night it was; but it calmed down about three o’clock in the morning, and blew a small wind with a heavy surf and a bitter cold drizzle and sea mist. At six o’clock that morning two

Cullercoats fishermen—I could give you their names, sir, but they don't concern the story—went down upon the sands—yonder, just as you're looking—to prowl about, as their custom is, for whatever the sea might toss up after a storm. I think I see them now, with their sou'westers on and big boots, kicking their way slowly along close against the yellow foam, peering down but feeling with their feet, for there was no light but what came out o' the sea—I mean they could see by the whiteness of the waves, that made a kind of shine when they broke and rushed back. They had worked their way as far as yon black bit," pointing to the dark patch that looked like tangled weed abreast of Briar Dene, "when he that was first, stopped, and, catching t'other's arm, said, 'Lord, keep us; what's that?' It was the body of a man, and nigh it, quite close, was another and another—ten in all. Never was such a sight seen—well, I won't say that; but it was a dree sight to stumble upon i' the blackness—all huddled together, sir, some on their backs looking up at the sky, some on their faces wi' their arms stretched out. O, sir, d'ye see the picture? Those two Cullercoats men holding their breath and standing like images, and the dead bodies lying at their feet as thick as if the sea had swept the corpses out of the graveyard yonder and brought 'em all naked and bruised down close against its cruel foam! Well, sir, the Cullercoats men were sailors, and the fear soon passed; they knew it was a shipwreck, and that the poor bodies wouldn't harm them. The tide was falling, the sea would leave the dead quiet awhile, and the two fishermen came along to Whitley here and gave the news. D'ye see yon fine house, sir? That's the Convalescent Home—a noble home, too, little known in your southern parts, I dare say, though it owes much to the late Duke—as princely a heart as there

was in this country, sir, if the whole truth could be told of him.

“Well, that little stable yonder belongs to the Home, and the cart that fetched the bodies carried ’em to that stable, and there they were laid. Upon the wall over each body was wrote 1, 2, 3, 4, down to 10; if ye’re gannin’ that way we’ll look in, and maybe ye’ll see the chalk-marks still. I couldn’t tell you how it was known that the drowned men were the crew of the *Cecilia*—an iron ship that had left the Tyne the day before, I think—but known it was. The bodies were all Seandinavians as we call them up here—Norwegians, and Swedes, and the like; all foreigners, saving one, but that we didn’t know till afterwards. One of the first that came down to look at them was Mr. Wheeler, the vicar of Cullereoats. He’s been a good many years among us, and thinking of him is like thinking of a parent; many a sore sight he’s had to look upon, many a sorrow has called him, as must happen to a man whose parish is half made up of sea-faring folk; but I’m sure he never saw the like o’ this sight before. I was there when he came, and his shoeked faee is full in my sight whilst I am talking. But who that has a heart wouldn’t have been shoeked? I have seen scores of drowned men in my time, but never such bodies as these, so mangled, so stripped, so cruelly wounded by the sea. More than this I won’t say; but when you know what the raging ocean will do to a stout ship, bolted with copper or plated with iron, and as solid, as one might say, as yon cliff, ye may guess how it’ll sarve a poor human body.

“But now, sir, I come to the part as ye’re interested in. It was known that these bodies were the crew of the *Cecilia*, and a message was sent to one Mrs. Jones, a poor soul that keeps a sailors’ lodging-house in North

Shields, to come along to Whitley and identify the corpses, for the news had spread that some of the *Cecilia's* people had lodged with that woman. She came as soon as she was called; it's but a short run from North Shields to Whitley. I was near the stable when she arrived, and saw her cast her eyes on the dead men. She knew most of them, spoke their names, which sounded strange; but it made me feel almost as soft and silly as a child to watch her face. She looked upon each poor body as though she had been its mother. The tears were in her eyes, and she spoke very low, and she kept a tight hold of her hands, as if she needed that to prevent her from giving way. Oh, sir, for pity, for sorrow, I never saw the like of her posture and face as she stood near the door, with her streaming eyes, saying yon was this and yon was that.

"I turned to a man who was by me, and said, 'Jim, these poor dead sailors have a friend. It don't matter, Jim,' I says, 'what be their country; yon's a heart big enough for the world.' Only a poor lodging-house keeper, too, sir; but see now what she did. Ye must know that in this North country our burial customs aren't quite, as I have heard say, like those of the South. When a body's dead, we dress it a'most as though it were living before we bury it. Well, this poor lodging-house keeper, Mrs. Jones, of North Shields, after identifying the bodies, goes away to her home, and sits up all night making shrouds. She's a poor, hard-working woman, as I know, yet she did this. Likewise, she purchased socks and drawers and shirts for each corpse, and with these things she came next day and went into the stable where the bodies were, and washed them and dressed them with her own hands. What she suffered in doing this, who can tell? Strong man as I am, sir, yet



I felt faint when I looked on those mangled corpses, and ne'er a night comes but what I say, 'Would to God I had na' seen them!'

"Mr. Wheeler, the clergyman, said that in' all his life never could he remember such a bit of beautiful Christianity as this poor woman showed. Think of her and another poor body that came along to help her, shut up alone in yon house wi' the ten corpses, tenderly washing them, and dressing them, as our North country fashion is, in the socks and shirts and drawers which were paid for out of her own bit money. You'd consider her good, I dare say, had you known she did no more than order the clothes at her own expense and leave the handling of the bodies to the parish. But that was not enough; all day, pretty near, she was with the corpses, making the little room in which they lay as holy as a church with her love and tears and compassion. As I've told you, they were all Scandinavians—all but one; but it wasn't known till the afternoon who he was; and these poor foreigners being cast up dead upon a strange land, as it might be, did make this shipwreck touch our hearts very closely, sir. But there was no part of it so touching as the compassion and toil of the poor North Shields lodging-house keeper. It wanted the courage that only a noble good heart in a woman can get to stay among those bruised and dreadful bodies, and to handle them as though each one had been a child that had slept in her bosom.

"Yonder, as I have told ye, round that point and away beyond Hartley, is Seaton Sluice, and there, that same day, five more dead bodies were found. They came to Whitley with the news, and Mrs. Jones, having done her sacred work in yon wee house, went along to Seaton Sluice, and did for those other five bodies just

what she had done for the corpses here. Ay, out of her own poor purse she bought socks and shirts and shrouds for them, and she washed and dressed them—making fifteen! Are there women—humble folk like her—in your part of the country as would do the like of this, sir? May be, may be; but this North Shields woman gives us something to talk about and to think over up here. One of the agents for the ship that had been wrecked came over from Newcastle in the afternoon; and, pointing to one of the bodies that we had taken to be a fo'k'sle man, like the rest, said it was the captain's. The sea had left enough of their faces—though their scalps were off—to make them known by, but had torn their clothes from their limbs, and left us no means of guessing their rating. They sent a telegram to his wife at Liverpool, but she was ill in bed and could not come, but her daughter arrived, and my heart did bleed for the poor young lady coming all the way from the other side of England to view the shocking sight of her father. Shocking, I say, for she had to look upon his face; but the rest did calm her, sir, for it showed that the poor remains had fallen into hands as merciful, as compassionate, as reverent as a mother's, and we all of us knew how faithfully the poor North Shields woman had done the work she had put upon herself when we felt that the daughter's love could not have done more for that dead and broken seaman. Yon's the churchyard where the bodies lie in. If ye're gannin that way we'll look in and see the graves. One body was taken to Shields by his friends; the other nine rest yonder, the captain separate, as ye'll see."

We walked slowly from the edge of the cliff, but I could not help casting a lingering look behind me at the Sands, framed in their semi-circle of soil-coloured rocks,

with the calm sea breaking in long thin lines of foam upon the shore, and St. Mary's Island in the north, casting a black shadow upon the blue water that circled it like a looking-glass, gleaming and motionless. The very brightness and beauty and calmness of the day helped out the sinister character which this shining bay took in my mind as the theatre of a performance in which the weird actors had been dead men. We reached the churchyard in a few minutes and entered it. The small stone church stood in one corner. It was Passion Week. Divine service was being held, and as I stood a moment looking at the tranquil little edifice, the hum of the congregation uttering the responses floated very softly upon the air. The graveyard was large, yet already nearly full, the grass-covered graves undulating to the furthestmost walls for all the world like the billows of the sea; here and there a shining white tall cross, or a handsome block of monumental marble. We stopped near a great square grave heaped up with dark brown soil.

"Here lies eight of the men, sir," said my companion, "and d'ye see yon little mound?—that's the captain's grave. The wreath upon it is but a skeleton now, for no leaves nor flowers could stand the bitter north-east wind a day; and bitter cold it be when it pipes up sharp and comes strong out from yonder," pointing across the sea. "The coffins here are four under and four atop; the men are shipmates still, d'ye take notice; the sea kept 'em together, and 'tis a pity that five of them should lie beyond the hill there. It's but a rude grave; but the vicar and the poor North Shields woman are working to get up a monument that's to be a cross upon rocks like to what the Queen sent out to the Cape to be put over the spot where the Prince Imperial was killed. I shall be

glad to see it up, sir ; it'll complete a beautiful work of goodness, and will help to cheer the hearts of all such sailors as come this way, by making them feel that Jack, no matter what his nation, isn't without great-hearted friends in this country, though some of them be but obscure poor bodies."

## MY LORD'S ADVENTURE.

"I WAS master of a yacht which I'll call the *Mollemoke* : a powerful, ocean-going, topsail schooner that had been built two-and-twenty years when my master purchased her : a vessel very finely lined under water, but showing a comfortable breadth of deck, with high and immensely strong bulwarks ; and a height of side, when stores, men, and all belonging to her were aboard, that made one feel that in a gale of wind there'd be nothing between her and a line-of-battle ship of the old school to set her an example of making good weather of the biggest seas a storm could roll at her.

"My master's name, if you like, was Lord Dorking, son of the Earl of Boxhill, and he was a man whose health was delicate. He had been yachting for years, and had sold a fine cutter in order to purchase the *Mollemoke*, that he might have a vessel under his feet fit to carry him to the West Indies, and on further to the south'ard yet, the doctor's notion being for him to keep at sea for some months, and to dodge the sun as best he could, so as never to have too much of heat nor of cold, but to knock about in latitudes where he'd find most comfort and ease.

"Three gentlemen accompanied him—one was a baronet, Sir Solomon Smith, the second was a Colonel

Peppercorn, and the third was a medical' man, who was right, I reckon, in most things concerning his own profession excepting rheumatism, which he said was in the blood, but which I say is in the bones, as, perhaps, he's found out by this time, though I wish him well, I'm sure, for I believe him to have been a man incapable of injuring any one, except by prescribing for 'em.

"Well, sir, we sailed away in the *Mollemoke*, and no better found yacht ever quitted an English port. We started in May; 'twas rather cold, with light head winds, that kept us bothering on the verge of soundings; but, quiet as the weather was, it tested the *Mollemoke* in a useful way by exhibiting her capacity under a draught of air that would come along like the waftings of a fan, and upon a sea that was scarce wrinkled if it wasn't for the ripples which slipped from our vessel's stem in lines like wire, and passed aft into a wake that lay flat and short, and gleaming like oil, with a hole or two in it, to make a wonder of the yacht's trick of sneaking along. There were no ladies aboard, nobody but the owner and his guests and the doctor, and after a bit they got a trifle bored—I mean, whilst the light baffling airs lasted and the sea and the sky were of the same light blue, and one as quiet as t'other, and when noon would come round and show an insignificant run. The atmosphere was too fresh to render lounging on deck agreeable, and as my lord was a quiet man, fond, may be, of an hour or two of whist, but no more, no great smoker, no drinker, and without the sort of health that gives one a taste for reading anything but the news of the moment, he found no particular pleasure in the cabin. He'd stand talking with me for a spell, and would explain that these ocean trips were not to his fancy; he liked to keep the land aboard, the green and white coasts of France and England

within a short shift of the helm; but day after day of sluggish movement amidst a circle that neither clouds nor sunshine, nor calms nor high seas, could prevent from becoming monotonous, caused life to be a tedious job; but he would say, 'After all, though, I'm here for my health, and complaining would be mighty ungracious if what I don't particularly like is going to do me good.'

"I could run this yarn into a long stretch of talking if I were to describe his lordship's friends, specially Sir Solomon, who was an old man of about two-and-thirty, by which you'll understand he had squeezed and crushed as much out of his youth as would have served him handsomely down to four-score, so that his face for wrinkles was like the shell of a walnut, and I never saw him take a step on his thin legs, ending in boots with gaiters, without reckoning that paralysis was bound to catch him before long, no matter if he hoped to outwit the devilish thing by putting the American continent 'twixt his nerves and the seas which washed the coasts of the island in whose metropolis I allow he had squandered a dollop of the flesh and blood of him with every sovereign he spent. But, be this as it may, sir—and considering my lord's character, I own it puzzled me that he should choose a companion like Sir Solomon, and a noisy, hairy-faced man like the military gentleman—though for the matter of that I remember hearing the Hon. Mr. Tomkynson, who was bred to the Church, and changed his mind just before he was ordained, saying that, for amusing company, he never wanted anything better than a street-nigger—I say that, let that be as it may, after we had been a week out we took a strong wind that gave us several fine runs, and the swift movement, the warmer air, the clear blue of the toppling and creaming seas, and

the fine behaviour of the yacht put plenty of cheerfulness aboard, and my lord began to think he could have done worse than seek for health upon the wide sea.

"Well, time passed; we cleared the Horse latitudes, where we found a thunderstorm so fierce and wild as even to make Sir Solomon look as if he really believed that the soul in him hadn't been drowned outright by the gallons of champagne he had swallowed in his day, and that it was about time he began to overhaul the contents of his mind; and then we took the North-east trades and ran with a fair slant athwart the Atlantic, but the steady wind failed us when we were in such and such a latitude and longitude—no use taxing my memory for exact figures, sir—and there we lay heaving on a middling bit of swell, with the draught blowing three or four different ways at once, as you'd sometimes think.

"There was a stock of pistols and guns below, and Sir Solomon says to my lord that it would agreeably kill the time if they turned to and fired at some mark. The colonel caught at the idea, and recommended tossing an empty bottle overboard.

"I says, 'My lord, I think it'll give you better practice if you were to sling a bottle at the topgallant yardarm, where it'll swing with every roll and give you and the gentlemen some trouble to cover.'

"Well, this was agreed to; and I sent a man aloft with an empty champagne bottle secured by the neck with a bit of stuff, the end of which he made fast to the yardarm, with a drop of about four feet, so that with the sail furled and the yard mastheaded it swung clear.

"This gave them rare sport; they blazed away, but the deuce a one of them could hit the bottle, and I don't wonder, for the swell made the spars jump, and it was harder to cover that bottle with a muzzle than to catch



a flea in a hammock. One after another took aim and let fly, and this had been going on for some time when Lord Dorking suddenly cries out—

“‘Yonder’s better practice than a bottle ;’ and, picking up a gun, he aimed far into the sky to the right of the main masthead and pulled the trigger.

“I looked to see what he had shot at, and saw it was a gull, a big sea-bird anyhow, that had been flying so as to cross the yacht from the starboard beam or a trifle before it. My lord’s aim was true, and the bird, with its wings curved in, fell fluttering down dead, and, striking the water, lay squattering there. It dropped close ; we had steerage way, and no more. I ran to the rail to look, and spying something hanging against the white breast of the bird I called my lord’s attention to it. He saw it too, and ordered the bird to be brought on board.

“A boat was lowered, and the gull handed up, and when we came to look we saw a small brass or copper tobacco-box, such as seamen sometimes used, slung round its neck. Inside the box was a piece of paper, and on it was written, in faint pencil, ‘Brig *Halifax*, floating on her cargo ; three men living. Help us, in God’s name, or report our loss to—,’ and here was added an address at Southampton, along with the names of the three men, the date, and the latitude and longitude. The date was only three days before, and the place named, as I found on the chart, 280 miles from where we were, bearing S.E.

“This put an end to shooting at the bottle ! I never saw any man more affected than his lordship was when the whole meaning of the thing broke in upon him, and he gazed at the dead bird.

“‘Great heaven !’ he cried, ‘to think that I should

have destroyed the poor creature, dispatched by the very hand of God himself to us !'

"The others tried to cheer him by saying that if the bird hadn't been killed we should never have got the news ; but it was no good, he couldn't have been more cast down had he innocently slain a human being. The truth is, sir, he saw something divine, something of the Almighty's ordering in the flight of this gull to us, and his killing of it struck him to the heart, spite of Sir Solomon saying that if he hadn't shot the bird the news of the brig's loss might never have been received. I call it a gull, but it was bigger than the birds known by that name, with a long, strong black beak, and a vast spread of wing.

"Well, sir, his lordship presently grew wild to reach the wreck that he might save the men if they were still living. He took me below, and we examined the chart afresh, and went into all the calculations possible, consulting the directory as to the nature of the tides thereabouts, and talking the thing over and over till I had satisfied him and myself that such and such a course was bound to bring us to where the wreck lay. Sir Solomon tried to put some of his ideas of humour into the business, but his lordship just fairly sat upon him. There was nothing particular in the words, but the look that accompanied it extinguished the baronet's wit like putting out a candle by snuffing it, and I never could have believed that a glance could cause a man who stood about about five foot five to appear as if he was not more than four foot four. I've read in novels about withering looks, but never till then had I seen the consequences of one.

"The weather remained baffling all that day. My lord was quiet, but any one could see it was the excite-

ment in him that kept him pale. He ordered the bird to be thrown overboard, for the feeling he had in the shooting of it was too true to carry him into any sentiment regarding it. I saw him watching the gull as it floated away, and then he gave a quick, startled, eager glance round the sky, with a sort of yearning in his eyes, as if he felt the wrong he had done in killing what he reckoned a messenger from God, and was praying for power to make atonement for it by saving the men. Ay, sir, as you say, 'twas like the man in the poem who shot the albatross; only what I'm telling you is true, and truth makes all the difference 'twixt yarns, be they of the shore or be they of the sea, whether they're written in rhymes or in the words people use when they talk.

"There came a change of weather at two bells in the first watch that night. The moon had risen out of a thick stretch of black smoke-like stuff, red and fierce as the pourings of fire from a volcano, and a strong wind came along in her wake as though it blew straight out of the angry orb. My lord, when he felt the vessel leaning, came up out of the cabin and talked to me earnestly about the bearings of the wreck, and asked me whether I thought she was likely to outlive the sea that would be set running presently, and so on. I answered that I could not speak as to that, but I could swear if the schooner missed the wreck it surely wouldn't be for the want of trying to find her, and that if it came to a failure it would be more likely because she wasn't afloat, or because her latitude and longitude had been wrongly given than because we didn't steer a true course for the spot.

"Well, sir, at midnight the breeze had blown up very strong, and the schooner, under reefed canvas, was splash-

ing and roaring through it in proper style, bowling out her fair eight knots, and rending and tearing through the dark seas in a way that reminded one of the action of a full-powered steamer, and lying up true as a hair for the bearings that had been named in the paper in the metal tobacco-box. All that night the wind held steady, and I allowed that when the dawn broke we had measured a fair seventy mile since the moon rose. My lord was up and down like any old skipper on a dark still night with a low barometer. The others seemed interested and anxious enough too, though not till next morning, for they never left their beds to step on deck to have a look round. Sir Solomon and the colonel betted about our finding the wreck, but on the sly—that is, out of his lordship's hearing; but I heard them when they were to wind'ard and I was to leeward of the tiller. We held on till noon, the wind moderating, which was better for the schooner, for we were able to give her all the canvas she carried, and this and the quieter sea allowed her to drive through it handsomely; so that when I had taken the sun's altitude, and worked out our position, I sent a hand aloft on the top-gallant yard with an order to him to keep his eyes skinned for anything that might look like a wreck, for, spite of our making her to be 280 miles distant, one could never be sure, seeing that men in extremity couldn't be counted upon for finding or guessing at their true position, while even a single-knot current might throw us far enough out to miss her for good and all.

“Well, it so happened I did the right thing, for an hour before sundown the chap that was on the look-out aloft hailed the deck and reported an object broad on the lee bow; but it was dark for some time before we were close to her, though then the moon flung a fine clear

light over the sea, and showed the vessel to be a small hull deep in the water, with main and fore masts gone about six feet above the deck, and nothing standing but the remains of a deck-house. We hove to and hailed her; and five times we united our voices and sung out before any notice was taken, and then we spied a figure crawl out from behind the remains of the deck-house, but if he called, we heard nothing. Yet his not being able to answer made no difference; it was enough that there was a live man on the hull, and his lordship instantly ordered a boat to be lowered, and insisted upon going in her himself. There was not much sea on, it's true; but there was enough risk in the venture to make me think my lord would be out of place in the boat, and I told him so, but he refused to listen. Indeed, I saw what it was—he meant by this action to make atonement for shooting the gull, and I suppose he felt he should be quit of his conscience on that score if the same hand that killed what he rightly called a messenger of God saved the life of a fellow-creature. So they went away, six of them and my lord, and they were half an hour gone, during which time I was manœuvring with the schooner to get her to leeward of the wreck and close to; after which we saw them leave the hull, and presently the boat came alongside, his lordship soaking wet, having fallen overboard, but able to raise a cheer as he sung out to us that of the three men who had sent the message, two were alive and in the boat.

“On the whole, sir, 'twas a fine adventure, and I like thinking of it. Some to whom I've related the yarn laughed at his lordship's tenderness, and said it was superstition, and that if he had been in better health he'd have taken no notice of his having potted an old gull. It might have been as they said; but the whole

thing was a lesson to take to heart—I mean by its showing how dumb creatures and human beings are links in a chain that binds the world together, and how beautiful is the teaching of the man who warns us never to blend our pleasure or our pride with the sorrow of the meanest thing living, whether it flies or crawls. The gull saved two precious lives. You answer if it hadn't been shot those lives wouldn't have been saved. How d'ye know? Suppose I hadn't noticed the tobacco-box on the breast of the bird when it was in the water, then my lord's bullet would certainly have killed the men as well as the gull; whereas, if he hadn't fired, who's to know that another ship wouldn't have come across the bird, and gone to the men's help? There are some animals you *must* kill for food, but what's not wanted I'm for letting be, sir; I'm for letting be. The earth, this beautiful earth, is big enough for us all; and of all that is in it, the very last to be cruel should be man, for it's man who most knows what suffering is. I always loved my lord for the sorrow and the tenderness he showed on that occasion, and I say if there was any superstition in the feelings which worked in him, then it's a quality there's not a man among us that can have too much of."

THE END.

[May, 1886.]



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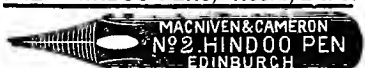
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